

RITIKA S

SIKHISM and RANKARI MOVEMENT

ACADEMY OF SIKH RELIGION AND CULTURE
1, Dhillon Marg, Bhupinder Nagar
PATIALA

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Publisher's Note

Nirankari movement was founded as renaissance of Sikh religion but lately an off-shoot of Nirankaris had started ridiculing Sikh Religion and misinterpreting Sikh scriptures for boosting up the image of their leader who claims to be spiritual head; God on Earth and re-incarnate of Shri Rama, Shri Krishna, Hazrat Mohammed, Holy Christ and Sikh Gurus. The followers of other religions did not react to this blasphemy. The Sikhs, however, could not tolerate the irreverence towards Sikh Gurus, Sikh religion and Sikh scriptures and protested against it. This pseudo God resented the protest and became more vociferous in his tirade against Sikhs, their Gurus and their Scriptures. His temerity resulted in the massacre of Sikhs at Amritsar on 13th April, 1978 (Baisakhi day) at Kanpur on 26th September, 1978 and again in Delhi on 5th, November 1978.

This booklet is published to apprise the public of the back ground of Nirankaris, the off-shoot of Nirankaris, the cause of controversy and the aftermath. It contains three articles : one, by Dr. Ganda Singh, a renowned historian, second, by Dr. Fauja Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala. and third, by S. Kapur Singh, formerly of I.C.S. cadre. A copy of the report of the Enquiry Committee on the Happenings at Kanpur, appointed by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee whose members were S. Hukam Singh, formerly speaker of Lok Sabha, S. Mehar Singh Chaudha, Retired District & Sessions Judge and S. Hazara Singh, Advocate of Supreme Court, is also printed at the end.

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I

Sikhism and The Nirankari Movement

1

Sikhism as preached by Guru Nanak and his successors aimed at giving to the people a simple natural religion and at freeing them from meaningless and wasteful rites and rituals created by the priestly classes to exploit the masses for their own selfish gains. The multiplicity of gods and goddesses and the worship of idols and images had divided them into innumerable schismatic factions with the result that they could never dream of coming together for a common cause. The division of the people of the country into castes and classes had already done incalculable harm to the land of Bharat. With the Brahmans exploiting them and the ruling Kshatriyas maltreating them, they had forfeited the sympathies of the Vaishyas and the Sudras who formed the bulk of the population. The depressed Sudras, in majority of cases, were looked down upon as sub-human beings and treated as untouchables and unapproachables. All this was responsible for the disunity and weakness of the country and stood in the way of the creation of the idea of oneness among her people. The adventurous tribes on the north-west of the country knew of this inherent weakness of the Brahman-ridden people of India. They, therefore, feared no opposition from the general populace. They also knew that the entire wealth of the country was concentrated either in the Brahmanical sanctuaries or with the few ruling families who held the political power in their hands. Therefore, they became the particular targets of the attacks of the invaders and their accompanying hordes. The main bulk of the population, which counted for nothing in wealth and power, remained unaffected and disinterested. Reduced to non-entities by the upper classes they only watched them being robbed of their pelf and power, bloated with which they had been looking down upon the rest of their fellow beings. The

invaders as such had always an easy walk over millions of Indians who seldom stood up unitedly to oppose them. In fact the sense of the oneness of the country and its people had not been allowed to grow by the diversity of gods and goddesses and division in castes and classes with varying and, not unoften, opposite interests. With the coming in of the Muslims, disunity and strife was further aggravated. While the Brahamans dubbed the Muslims as *Malechha*, the Muslim *Mullas* termed the Hindus as *Kafirs*. Thus mutual hatred among the Indian people and among the rulers and ruled deepened and broadened to an unbridgeable extent with unhappy impact on the history of the country. Of this Guru Nanak was an eye-witness during the late Lodhi and early Mughal periods. He had been in close touch with some of the officials of the government of his days and had first-hand knowledge of how people groaned under their oppressive heel. He had also seen how, during the third invasion of Babar, the town of Eminabad was subjected to an indiscriminate massacre in 1521 when its people, in the words of Farishta, "were, in the end, all put to the sword, their wealth given up to depredation and their children and wives carried away" as slaves, numbering thirty thousand. (Dow, *Hist. of Hindostan*, ii, 14.) The Guru was greatly moved to see the pitiable condition of his countrymen, particularly of the womenfolk, at the hands of the Mughal invaders and shed tears of blood on their helplessness. All this was due, he felt, to disunity born of diversity of views in their religio-social lives. Men who followed different and opposite paths, with hatred for one another, could not come together for defence against a common enemy. The first thing, therefore he thought, was to inculcate in them their oneness, the oneness of humanity through the oneness of the fatherhood of God, the Creator of mankind, to whom all his children are equal and who has no enmity towards any one. And this is the keynote of the teaching of Guru Nanak with which the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, begins. As for religion, "There is but one religion, the religion of Truth, if one were to follow it with firm determination" said he. And the true followers of

a religion as this, with a firm belief in the Unity of God, the Creator, and in the Brotherhood of His children, cannot in honesty believe in different kinds of gods and goddesses or in castes and classes which divide them into opposite groups and warring factions, leading to a deplorable state into which India had than been landed, To save people from such an ungodly path of misery and pain, Guru Nanak devoted all his energies to expose the hollowness of idol worship and the Brahmin-made caste system which had eaten into the vitals of the Indian society. He not only preached this to all his followers and visitors and composed hymns to be sung in his congregations, but he also established, wherever he went, *Sangats* or mixed congregations where people came and sat together irrespective of their castes and creeds. These *Sangats* soon developed into Sikh missionary centres, known as *Dharamsalas*. To these came to be added free Community kitchens, *Guru ka langar*, where all sat together in lines, or *Pangats*, without distinction and partook of the food served therein, unmindful of who cooked and served it. These two institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* removed, for all practical purposes, the distinctions of castes and classes, of high and low and of touchables and untouchables, from among the followers of the Guru and knit them all into the brotherhood of Sikhs, free from the shackles of the Brahmins.

While the second Guru Angad taught the Sikhs lessons in unquestioning obedience to the word of Guru Nanak and strengthened the institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat*, the third Guru Amardas went a step further and made it mandatory for all visitors to partake of the food served in the *Guru ka Langar* before they had an interview with him. There was no exception to it. Even the greatest of the great in the country, such as Emperor Akbar, and the high caste Rajput Raja of Haripur of the Shivalak Hills had to observe it.

The fourth Guru Ramdas gave to the Sikhs a religious centre, a Benaras, a Mecca, of their own in the city of Amritsar, and the fifth Guru Arjun gave to them their holy book, the *Granth Sahib*, wherein he collected not only the

writings of Guru Nanak and his successors, including himself, but also a number of Hindu, Muslim and the so-called untouchable saints of India, such as Sadhna, a Muslim butcher, Kabir, a weaver, and Ravidas, an untouchable cobbler. The scripture of the Sikhs, as such, may rightly be called the *bible of the people*. The most remarkable thing about it is that, unlike the Hindu scriptures, it is written in the spoken language of the people to whom the Gurus delivered their message of devotion to God and service of humanity. With this, the independence of the Sikh religion was firmly established. They had no longer to look to Brahmin priests for their social ceremonies on the occasion of births, marriages, deaths, etc.

In fact, in Sikhism caste had come to be completely obliterated. The Brahmins were no longer looked upon as superior to the Khatri or Jats, nor were the Jats looked down upon as inferior to the Khatri or Brahmins. Once a person came into the fold of Sikh brotherhood, he was one with the others. Writing about them in the middle of the seventeenth century with first-hand personal knowledge, the author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* tells us :

There is no restriction among them that a Brahmin may not become the disciple of Khatri, for Nanak was a Khatri and no Guru among them was from the Brahmins... Similarly they placed Khatri under the authority of the Jats who belong to the low caste of the *Vaishya*, as the big *masands* of the Guru are mostly Jats. The Brahmins and Khatri become the pupils and disciples of the Guru through the medium of *masands* and are accepted into the pupilage and discipleship of the Guru (p. 233).

The simplicity and cosmopolitan nature of Sikhism not only attracted to it a large number of Hindus but also of Muslims. This could not be tolerated by the Muslim Naqshbandi revivalists of Sirhind whose leader Shaikh Ahmad, popularly known as *Mujaddid-i-Alf-sani*, had been hoping to expand his own missionary activities in this part of the country. Opposed to Emperor Akbar's policy of religious tolerance, the Naqshbandi zealots had won over his power-

hungry son Jahangir with promises of Muslim support on the understanding that, on being raised to the throne, he would act as the Royal Defender of the Muslim faith. This was responsible for the martyrdom of Guru Arjun during the first year of his reign. Jahangir himself writes in his *Tuzak* that: "a Hindu named Arjun in the garb of *Pir* and *Saikh* had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus, nay even of foolish and stupid Muslims, and he had noised himself about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him *Guru* and from all directions fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three and four generations they had kept this shop warm. For a long time the thought had been presenting itself to me that I should either put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam." During Prince Khusro's flight to the Panjab, the Guru was alleged to have sympathised with him. Without making any enquiry about the correctness of the allegation, Jahangir ordered that "having confiscated his property he should be put to death with tortures." [Also see *Muktubat-i-Iman Rabbani*, vol. I, part ii, letter No. 193.] Thus did Guru Arjun lay down his life at the altar of his new faith.

This was the first step taken by the Mughal rulers of country to suppress the Sikh religious movement. Jahangir also ordered the imprisonment of Sixth Guru Hargobind who was incarcerated in the fort of Gwalior and was later released on the recommendation of Saint Mian Mir of Lahore. Guru Har Rai was summoned to Delhi by Emperor Aurangzeb but he was outwitted by the Guru's son Ram Rai who went there in place of his father. After the seventh Guru's death, the eighth Guru Har Krishan was called to Delhi, but he died there of small pox soon after his arrival. Then was the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur arrested under the order of Aurangzeb and was executed at Delhi in 1675 for his sympathy with the helpless Brahmins of Kashmir whom the Emperor wished all to be brought into the fold of Islam.

Guru Gobind Singh did away with all the vestiges of Brahmanical distinctions of caste and creed and of high and low

lurking in the minds of his people. He introduced a new and a novel kind of baptismal ceremony, the *Khande da Amrit*, whereby he created the *Khalsa* out of the Sikhs with the common surname of *Singh*. The novices coming together without any distinction of cast and creed were required to drink the sugared water, stirred with a double-edged sword, one after the other from one and the same vessel in a double round, the first man becoming the last in the second round.

Not only this, The Guru went a step further. After the first five—*Panj Piare*—had been baptized and the new discipline, the *Rahit* of the *Khalsa*, had been explained to them, Guru himself begged of them that he might as well be baptized in the same form and manner. The initiation of a *Guru* by his disciples was a thing unknown in the history of religions. Guru Gobind Singh, however, wished to be baptized as one of them, adopting the same form and wearing the same symbols. And, he offered to submit himself to the same discipline as had been prescribed for the *Khalsa*. This done, he became one of the *Khalsa*, adopting the common surname of *Singh*. This strange and remarkable phenomenon has been acclaimed by contemporary poet Bhai Gurdas II (Bahlo-ke) in his verse saying :—

ਵਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿਓ ਮਰਦ ਅਗੰਮੜਾ ਵਰੀਆਮ ਇਕੋਲਾ
ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ (41—47)

And lo ! there appeared an unsurpassable man;
Wonderful, Wonderful is Guru Gobind Singh a unique
hero—a venerable preceptor as well as a humble disciple.
(*Var xil-17*)

Thus with inspiration from the Great Lord, continues he, was created the *Khalsa*, the third *Panth*—ਤੀਸਰ ਮਜ਼ਹਬ ਖਾਲਸਾ—
independent of the Hindu and Muslim religions.¹

1. ਗੁਰ ਬਰ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਸੋ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਬਿਗਿਆਨਾ ।
ਤਬ ਸਹਿਜੇ ਰਚਿਓ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਾਬਤ ਮਰਦਾਨਾ ।...
ਇਹ ਤੀਸਰ ਮਜ਼ਹਬ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਉਪਜਿਓ ।.....
ਇਉਂ ਤੀਸਰ ਪੰਥ ਰਚਾਇਨ ਵਡ ਸੂਰ ਗਹੇਲਾ ।
ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ ॥ 16 ॥

The Guru himself has explained in clearest words his views on the point of his devotion to one God, regardless of what is propounded by other religions. "Ever since have I devoted myself to your feet, O Lord", said he, "I recognize no one else. The Hindu and Muslim leaders and their sacred books talk of many creeds, but I believe in none of them. By Thy grace, O Lord, whatever I have said has been inspired by Thee. Leaving all others, I have come to Thee. Take me in your protection, O Lord, I am a slave of Yours." (*Ram Avtar*, (863-64.)²

To warn his people against calling him an *Avtar*, an incarnation of God or God Himself, like the Hindus, he declared in un-equivocal language that he was but a human being like themselves. To call any human being God, according to him, was a heretic blasphemy and was against the teachings of Sikhism which inculcated that the One True God takes no birth and is Formless. "Those who call me God", said he, "shall all fall into the pit of hell. Consider me a slave of His, and have no doubt about it. I am but a slave of the Great Lord, and have come to see the spectacle of the World." (*Bachittar Natak*, *Apni Katha*, 32-33.)³)

With implicit faith in the One formless Creator, Guru Gobind Singh declared the *Khalsa* to be *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa*, the Lord's Own. With one's self and ego subdued, the credit for all his successes and victories—*fateh*—in his day-to-day battles in life belongs to Him—*Wahiguru*—the source and granter of all successes. As such, the *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa* acclaims them to be *Wahiguru ji ki fateh*. And ever

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2. ਪਾਇ ਗਹੇ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਤੁਮਰੇ ਤਬ ਤੇ ਕੋਊ ਅਖ ਤਰੈ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਨਯੋ ।
ਰਾਮ ਰਹੀਮ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਕੁਰਾਨ ਅਨੇਕ ਕਹੈ ਮਤ ਏਕ ਨ ਮਾਨਯੋ ।
ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸ਼ਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਬੇਦ ਸਬੈ ਬਹੁ ਭੇਦ ਕਹੈ ਹਮ ਏਕ ਨਾ ਜਾਨਯੋ ।
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਸਪਾਨਿ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਤੁਮਰੀ ਕਰਿ ਮੈ ਨ ਕਹਿਯੋ ਸਭ ਤੋਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਯੋ ॥ 863॥

ਦੋਹਰਾ

ਸਗਲ ਦੁਆਰ ਕਉ ਛਾਡਿ ਕੈ ਗਹਯੋ ਤੁਹਾਰੋ ਦੁਆਰ ।
ਬਾਹਿ ਗਹੈ ਕੀ ਲਾਜ ਅਸ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਦਾਸ ਤੁਹਾਰ ॥864॥

(ਰਾਮਾਵਤਾਰ)

3. ਜੋ ਹਮ ਕੋ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਉਚਰ ਹੈ । ਤੇਂ ਸਭਿ ਨਰਿਕ ਕੁੰਡ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਿ ਹੈ ।
ਮੈ ਕੋ ਦਾਸੁ ਤਵਨ ਕਾ ਜਾਨੋ । ਯਾ ਮੈਂ ਭੇਦ ਨ ਰੰਚ ਪਛਾਨੋ ॥32॥
ਮੈ ਹੋਂ ਪਰਮਪੁਰਖ ਕਾ ਦਾਸਾ । ਦੇਖਨਿ ਆਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਤਮਾਸਾ ।...

since the creation of the *Khalsa* the two phrases *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa* and *Wahiguru ji ki Fateh* have become the mutual salutation of the *Khalsa*, the *Singhs*.

The creation of the *Khalsa* was, in fact, a proclamation of the independent entity of Sikhism. They were thenceforward to look to the Word of the Gurus, as incorporated in the holy *Granth Sahib*, as their only guide in their religio-social ceremonies. This freed them from the age-old dependence on the ancient priests and saved them from exploitation. Not only this. Drinking the baptizing *Amrit* from one and the same bowl along with other brothers-in-faith, irrespective of their old castes and creeds, and distinctions of high and low or of touchables, and untouchables, they found themselves transformed into a new people. With the hair of their heads and faces intact, and beards flowing, there was a marked change in their appearance and personality. Dressed in shorts, with swords dangling by their sides, and protective steel bangles on their wrists, they looked like soldiers. This also brought about a change in their mental outlook and they felt called upon to fight for the protection of the weak and helpless and for the suppression of tyrants. It was under this impulse that, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, his disciple Banda Singh *Bahadur* led the Sikh volunteer force against the Mughals in the Panjab and freed most of it to the south and east of Lahore. But the Mughal empire was yet too strong for the rising power of the Sikhs. And ultimately Banda Singh was captured at Gurdas Nangal in the district of Gurdaspur and was taken to Delhi along with some eight hundred Sikhs. There they were all executed in March-June 1716. But not one of them abjured his faith to save his life. According to Khafi Khan, who was an eye-witness of this great carnage, an old widowed mother secured the order for the release of her young son. But the boy refused to be released and offered his head to the executioner saying: "I am heart and soul a devoted follower of my Guru. Despatch me quickly to my companions." On June 9, 1716, Banda

Singh himself and some of his close companions were removed to the tomb of Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiar Kaki at the Qutb Minar for execution. There he was tortured in many ways and his flesh was torn with red hot pincers. His young son was hacked to pieces and his quivering heart was thrust into Banda Singh's mouth. Finding him unmoved, calm and serene, Itmad ud-Daulah Muhammad Amin Khan, a mughal noble, questioned him about his activities against the Mughals. In reply Banda Singh said : "Whenever men become so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses, then the providence never fails to raise up a scourge like me to chase a race so depraved. (*Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, 403; Raymond, i, 91, Briggs, 79-80)

Emperor Bahadur Shah had issued an edict on December 10, 1710, for a general massacre of the Sikhs wherever found. But Banda Singh did not allow his struggle against the tyranny of the Mughal government to be reduced to a communal strife between the Sikhs and Muslims. It was a matter of coincidence that Mughal rulers happened to be Muslims. Otherwise, Banda Singh was not against the Muslims as such. His was a political struggle against the tyranny of the rulers of the day. This is borne out by the fact that some five thousand Muslims of the Kalanaur and Batala areas had joined the army of Banda Singh to fight against the Mughal Government. According to the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* of April 28 and May 20, 1711, Banda Singh had declared that he meant no harm to the Muslims and that they were free to shout their call and recite their *khutba* and *namaz* in the Sikh army. It is also stated therein that the Sikh chief had fixed daily allowance and regular wages for them and looked after them in every way.

According to the *Miftah-ut-Tawarikh* (p. 398), the edict of Emperor Bahadur Shah was repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar saying that "the men of this sect wherever found may be unhesitatingly killed." Money reward was offered for the head of every Sikh dead or alive. The

situation became worse during the governorship of Zakaria Khan who seemed determined to exterminate the whole nation of the Sikhs." In hundreds "they were daily brought in chains and executed in the streets of Lahore," says Syed Muhammad Latif. Driven from their homes and hearths, they had to seek shelter in jungles and deserts. The period of the governorship of Mir Muin-ul-Mulk, popularly known as Mir Mannoo (1748-53), was the worst. Even Sikh women and children were seized and taken to Lahore and imprisoned in the dark and narrow dungeons in the compound of Shahidganj, where little babes were cut to pieces and placed in the laps of their mothers. But all this failed to produce any demoralizing effect upon the Sikhs or to deter them from their resolve to free their land from the rule of tyranny. Accepting it with resignation in the Will of God, they smiled away the persecution of Mir Mannoo in a song of bravado, saying :

ਮੰਨੂੰ ਅਸਾਡੀ ਦਾਤਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਮੰਨੂੰ ਦੇ ਸੋਏ,
ਜਿਉਂ ਜਿਉਂ ਮੰਨੂੰ ਵਢਦਾ ਅਸੀਂ ਦੂਣ ਸਵਾਏ ਹੋਏ ।

that is :

Mannoo is our sickle,
and we are a crop for him to mow,
The more he cuts us, the more we grow.

This was literally true. The blood of Sikh martyrs helped raise a bumper crop of volunteers to join the ranks of the *Dal Khalsa* and die for the cause of *dharmā*, the liberation of the motherland. The death of Mir Mannoo on November 4, 1753, by having been dragged along the earth by his frightened horse in a Sikh-hunting expedition, gave them a sigh of relief from the Mughal side. But they had yet to face another and a stronger enemy in Ahmad Shah Durrani of Afghanistan who successfully brought the Mughal Emperor to his knees in 1757 and 1759 and defeated the Marathas at Panipat in 1761. In February, 1762 he also inflicted a very heavy loss of life on the Sikhs in the second holocaust, known as *Wadda Ghalughara*. But the Sikhs were made of a different unbending metal. They knew no defeat. It only hardened them

for a counter offensive. Within three months of the *Ghalughara*, while Ahmad Shah was still in the Panjab, the Sikhs rushed upon Sirhind and defeated his Governor Zain Khan. On January 14, 1764, the third anniversary of the battle of Panipat, they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Afghans of Sirhind, killed its governor Zain Khan in battle and freed the entire cis-Sutlej Panjab from the Afghan possession.

Ahmad Shah was then all rage against the Sikhs, and he rushed upon the Panjab in the winter of the year, but he was sadly disappointed in his campaign. The Sikhs would not let him have foothold in the land. Qazi Nur Muhammad of Gunjaba, who had accompanied the Shah, was greatly impressed with what he saw of the Sikhs and has, in his *Jung-Nama*, paid glowing tribute to them for their bravery and high moral character, saying :

They are courageous like lions in the field of battle...

The body of every one of them is like a piece of rock,
and in physical grandeur, every one of them is more
than fifty persons...

During a battle they come jumping into the field of
action, roaring like lions...

If their army takes to flight, do not take it as an actual
flight. It is a war tactic of theirs...

In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put
an obstacle in the way of a fugitive.

They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a wo-
man, be she a well-to-do lady or a maid servant.

There is no adultery among them, nor are they given to
thieving.

The ways and manners of these people received their
impetus from Nanak who taught them a separate
religion;

He was succeeded by Gobind Singh. From him they
received the title of *Singh*.

They are not from amongst the Hindus. They have a
separate religion of their own, (*Chapter xii*, pp. 156-9)

This was the *Khalsa* of the eighteenth century who, under
the impact of the teachings of Gurus Nanak-Gobind Singh,

had risen to such heights of personal valour and morality as to elicit this high praise from one of their worst enemies. Credit for this all is due to the Immortalizing draught, the *Khande da Amrit*, administered to them by the Great Guru. It not only freed them from old Hinduism but also infused a new life in them with exemplary character and undying spirit for the service of the community and country.

No sooner did Ahmad Shah Durrani leave the country towards the end of March 1765 then the Khalsa met at Amritsar on the occasion of Baisakhi on April 10 and decided by a *gurmata* to march upon Lahore which, they occupied on the 16th. With the occupation of the capital of the Panjab, virtually the whole of the Panjab was freed not only from the Mughals but also from the Afghans.

In response to the joint petition of the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh citizens of Lahore, Sardar Ranjit Singh of the Sukkarchakkia *Misal* made it the capital of his territories in 1799 and laid there the foundation of the Sikh empire which became a part of the British empire in India in 1849.

2

Though the Khalsa were able to secure the political independence of the Panjab from local tyranny and foreign incursions, they could not, unfortunately, maintain the purity of their religion against the inroads of Brahminism. The reasons are not far to seek. Soon after the creation of the Khalsa in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh had not only to face the opposition of the Brahmin-ridden Hindu Rajas of the Shivalak Hills but also of the Mughal officials. This robbed him of almost all of his time required for the proper grounding of the new Khalsa converts who had come mostly from the Hindu stock. During the short period of Banda Singh Bahadur (1709-16), the Khalsa was busy in fighting against the Mughal faujdars who, in pursuance of the royal *farmans* of Emperors Bahadur Shah and Farukh-Siyar for the indiscriminate wholesale massacre of the Sikhs, were doing their utmost to exterminate the community. This continued for some forty years when the Khalsa had to seek shelter in desert, jungles and mountains. During their absence, the religious

places like *dharamsalas* were desecrated and demolished, and their scriptural literature was burnt down. Under these circumstances, the maintenance of Sikh missionary and educational centres was impossible. The same uncertain state of affairs continued up to the end of the century when they had not unoften to face the Afghan invasions and struggle against the remnants of the old order and consolidate their political gains.

Some efforts were, of course, made during the days of the Misals and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, both trans-Sutlej and cis-Sutlej areas, to revive the Gurdwaras and *dharmshalas* with which the educational centres, known as *pathsalas* were closely associated. In the north, commendable work was done by Udasi *Sadhus* and in the South by Nirmala saints. But as both of these orders believed in asceticism and were mostly scholars of Sanskrit and Vedantic literature, they had Brahmanical leanings. They could not feel persuaded to instruct the Sikh masses in the puritan way of life as enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was, no doubt, a Sikh, but his government was not a theocracy. It was a popular government. Its important ministerial portfolios were mostly held by Muslims and Hindus. It is true that *Nihang Singhs* at times played a prominent part in religious matters. But, generally, they remained exclusive, taking no interest in public affairs much less in the propagation of religion or in running of *pathsalas* or schools for the education of people to have any influence on their lives. On the other hand, the Brahmin adventurers from the Uttar Pradesh, and the Dogras from Jammu, assumed undue importance in the councils of the Maharaja and gathered round them people of their own persuasions. With them came in the worship of the Hindu gods and goddesses and the performance of Brahmanical ceremonies which were also occasionally attended and performed by the Sikh *Sirdars* either out of courtesy towards their friends and colleagues or for lack of knowledge of their own faith. And such social courtesy at the sacrifice of one's religious conviction is a sign of weakness. This growing weakness on the part of Sikhs in the first half of the nineteenth century

was keenly felt by the sincere devotees of Sikhism who feared lest it should, in course of time, reduce the religion of Gurus Nanak-Gobind Singh to a minor sect of Hindusm or result in its absorption therein beyond recognition. This meant the nullification of the work of the Gurus and of the Khalsa for over three centuries for the uplift of the people.

Considerable responsibility for this rot lay on the shoulders of the Bedi and Sodhi families to which the Gurus had originally belonged. The respect with which the common people looked upon them was not unoften expressed by their prostrating before them or by touching their feet. In their vanity, these Bedi and Sodhi elders assumed the airs of undue superiority and behaved like spiritual preceptors or *gurus* of old. At times they moved from place to place with large following, receiving offerings from their admirers and 'showering' blessings upon them. This became a sort of man-worship which had been disapproved and deprecated by the Sikh Gurus.

3

All these un-Sikh practices were eating into the vitals of the religion and called for a bold reformer to stem the tide of heresy. And, he appeared in the person of *Baba Dayal*. As a devoted *Sahajdhari* Sikh, he was staunch believer in the independent entity of the Sikh faith, with *Guru Granth Sahib* as its only scripture. He held that all ceremonies in life should be performed with the recitation of the hymns of their holy book which inculcated the worship of the One Formless God—*Nirankar*—through constant repetition of His Name. With *Nirankar* always on his lips and asking others to do the same, he was known as *Nirankari*, and his movement for bringing back people from heresy to the path of *Nirankar* also acquired the same name.

Baba Dayal was born at Peshawar on May 16, 1783 (Baisakh Sudi 15, Puranmasi, 1840 BK.). His ancestors originally belonged to Kabul in Afghanistan, and had shifted to Peshawar. Here his father Ram Sahai Malhotra ran a banking shop dealing with the exchange of Afghan currency.

His mother Ladikki was a pious lady. She regularly attended the morning service at the Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh and was accompanied by her son. This greatly influenced the life of young Dayal. With the deaths of his parents in quick succession, Daya! was persuaded by his maternal uncle Milkha Singh to move to Rawalpindi in 1808. Here he started a grocer's shop. He soon attracted the attention of the local Sikhs with his honest and truthful dealings and regular attendance at the Bara-dari Gurdwara, known as *Peshawarian di dharmsala*.

In March 1809 his business once took him to the town of Bhera which was then a great market. Here he stayed at the Dharamsala of *Sant Budhu Shah* of the Sewa-Panthi order and developed close relationship with him through his discourses and identical views on Sikhism. Bhai Charan Das Kapur and his wife Bishan Devi, who generally attended the dharmsala, were highly impressed by the religious devotion and personality of Bhai Dayal and offered the hand of their daughter Mool Devi in marriage to him. This was the month of Chaitra which is considered inauspicious for marriages by Brahmins who would not agree to perform the marriage ceremony during the *Nahs* or ill-omened days. But Bhai Dayal had no belief in the sinister aspect of the stars and looked upon it as a superstition deprecated by Sikhism. Sant Budhu Shah endorsed his views and, with his persuasion, Charan Das and his wife agreed to the performance of their daughter's marriage in the local gurdwara in the month of Chaitra itself with the recitations of *Anand* and other hymns from the *guru Granth Sahib*, followed by the Sikh prayer, the *Ardas* of the *Khalsa*. This marriage is very significant in history for its simplicity, freedom from Brahmanical rites and devotion to the Word of the Gurus. It also added to the reputation of *Bhai Dayal* as a practical reformer. Example is always better than precept and is a living proof of the preceptor's sincerity.

On one occasion during his visit to Rawalpindi, Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent, through an orderly of his, a *Mohar* for *Prasad* at the dharamsala of Bhai Ram Singh where Baba

Dayal used to discourse upon the hymns of *Guru Granth Sahib*. The *Baba* sent back a message saying that it would be more in the fitness of things for the Maharaja to attend the congregation at the gurdwara and to make the offering personally. The Maharaja readily accepted the suggestion and was present at the Gurdwara next morning. He also proposed to grant a *jagir* to *Baba* Dayal who, however, declined to accept it. The Maharaja then granted it in the name of the Gurdwara.

The radical reforms preached by *Baba* Dayal were not relished by the priestly class of the Brahmins, most of whose income came from the offering of the people whose ceremonies were guided and presided over by them. Some of reactionary Sikhs were also opposed to his views under similar influences. The leaders of this opposition were Nihal Singh Chhachhi and a Hindu named Tauroo Rai. In the course of a discussion, they told him that while he washed the feet of humblest of Sikhs, he preached against the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses. This they said, was a sort of blasphemy and they imposed upon him a fine on behalf of the Hindu society. True to his conviction, *Baba* Dayal replied that as a Sikh, he was doing what the great Gurus had preached and was not liable to pay any fine or to be coerced by ostracism. This not only resulted in his personal boycott, and of his Nirankari associates, but also in closing to him the doors of *Peshawarian di dharamsala*. But nothing could deflect him from the path that he had chosen for himself. He believed his cause to be right and sacred. Opposition to it rather added to his moral strength. He purchased a piece of land on December 3, 1851, on the bank of the Layee stream to the southwest of the city and set up a *gurdwara* there, known as Nirankari Darbar. With this the Nirankari movement gained a permanent footing. The followers and admirers of *Baba* Dayal began their work of reform with greater zeal. The manuscript volume of the sacred *Guru Granth Sahib* of 1748 (1805 Bk.) was also brought from *Peshawarian di dharamsala*, and, in spite of the opposition of Nihal Singh and Tauroo Rai, the reform-minded Sikhs gathered at the new Nirankari gurdwara in increasing numbers.

One Bhai Diwan Singh of Mangowal, popular for his religious discourses, visited Rawalpindi with a number of his followers and put up in the Bara-dari Gurdwara. He was invited to dinner by two Nirankari brothers. One of them happened to die during the night before the fixed day. Bhai Diwan Singh, therefore, refused to come for the dinner saying that it had become polluted and that it would remain so for 13 days for ordinary people and for 21 days for saints like himself. This was nothing but a superstition. When *Baba Dayal* heard of it, he desired that the food prepared for the occasion might be brought to the Nirankari *Sangat* and it was served there after the cremation, unmindful of the murmurings of some people. He also availed himself of the earliest opportunity to address a large gathering in the Bara-dari gurdwara in the presence of Bhai Diwan Singh and, referring to the incidence, he quoted from the *Guru Granth Sahib* the hymns of the Gurus saying that births and deaths were all in the Will of God and that there was no pollution for those who believed in Him.

During the visit of *Baba Dayal* to Kala Gujran in the district of Jhelum, a *Sadhu*, Beli Ram by name, was greatly upset by his unitarian preachings and, with the help of his follower Asa Ram, administered to Bhai Dayal a poisonous pill instead of a tonic. Fortunately it had no adverse effect on him. Seeing him hale and hearty after some days, the *Sadhu* was greatly surprised. And, when Bhai Dayal asked him for another pill saying that the previous one had done him good, *Sadhu* Beli Ram and his follower not only acknowledged their crime and asked for his forgiveness but also abandoned their ascetic way of life and came to the Sikh faith.

Baba Dayal had three sons, Darbara Singh born on Wednesday Baisakh 1, 1871 Bk. (April 11/12, 1814), Bhag Mall, born in 1877 Bk. (A.D. 1820) and Ratan Chand born on Thursday, Chaitra Sudi 1, 1887 Bk. (March 25, 1830). All of them were Sikhs, dedicated to the Nirankari mission of their father.

The performance of some of the Brahmanical rites on the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore on June 27, 1839,

and of the *satī* or burning alive of four of his queens and seven maid-servants on his funeral pyre under the baneful influence of the Brahmins and the Dogras sent out a thrill of horror throughout the country. The same horrid spectacle was seen in November 1840 when his son Maharaja Kharak Singh and grandson Kunwar Nau-Nihal Singh died. The custom of *satī* was not only cruel and inhuman in nature but was also un-Sikh. Bhai Dayal, therefore, raised a strong voice against it in his congregations and warned the Sikhs against following it.

Baba Dayal passed away at Rawalpindi at the age of 72 on Tuesday, Magh 18, 1911 BK., January 29/30, 1855. The opponents of Nirankari movement reported to the local officials that he had been socially boycotted by the people of the city and if his body were taken to the common crematorium, there might be some disturbance of peace. To avoid this, a prohibitory order was issued by the Deputy Commissioner. This came as a great surprise to the Nirankaris. But Bhai Darbara Singh, the eldest son of Bhai Dayal, had already decided to entrust the dead body to the running waters of the Layee rivulet. This place, later on, came to be known as Dayal Sar.

A day before his death, *Baba Dayal* had nominated Bhai Darbara Singh as the future leader of the Nirankari mission. He was as enthusiastic about social reform in Sikh society as his father and he earnestly took the work in hand, particularly in respect of marriage ceremonies. Therein the Brahmanical influence was then being felt the most.

Within six weeks of his taking over the pontificate of the Nirankaris, *Baba Darbara Singh* called a conference of the members and admirers of the order on Chet 1, 1911 Bk., March 12, 1855. There he explained the teachings of the great Gurus and the Sikh way of life. He deplored at the same time that some un-Sikh practices had, with the passage of time, crept into the Sikh society under the influence of their neighbours dominated by the Brahmanical priests. He made a particular reference to the marriage ceremony where,

at the fire worship *havan*, the priest recited some verses in Sanskrit which nobody in the assemblage understood. Even the priest himself, at times, did not understand them. He only repeated what he had learnt up by heart. Moreover, Sikhism did not allow fire-worship or worship of any gods and goddesses, he said. Thus the whole ceremony became a meaningless formality.

For a practical demonstration of the Sikh marriage ceremony, *Baba Darbara Singh* called out for a girl and a boy. One *Hari Singh Adhwalia* stood up with his daughter *Nihali*, and then *Nihal Singh* with his son *Bhola Singh*. On the following morning, the couple was married in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* with the recitation of sacred hymns and *Anand* therefrom, and as an expression of devotion to the Word of the great Masters, the couple walked round the holy scripture four times to the accompaniment of the four hymns of *lawan* and then bowed down to it in submission to its teachings. *Baba Darbara Singh* then explained to the couple, in a common speech to all assembled on the occasion, their duties and responsibilities towards each other, and to the society at large. This simple ceremony of marriage sanctified by the teachings of the Gurus is known as *Gurmat Viyah* or *Anand Viyah*.

(The whole procedure prescribed for and followed in the *Anand* marriage ceremony is described in detail in the literature issued on the subject by the Nirankari Darbar, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.)

Baba Darbara Singh then undertook an extensive tour of the surrounding towns and villages in Pothohar to preach his mission and guided the performance of a number of marriages there according to the *Gurmat*.

Hearing of the fame of the Nirankari movement, *Bhai Ram Singh Namdhari* of Bhaini visited *Baba Darbara Singh* in the summer of A.D. 1856. The latter explained to him the various Sikh ceremonies as they should be performed in accordance with the teachings of the Gurus. The Namdhari leader, however, adopted only a part of the *Gurmat Viyah* ceremony inasmuch as performing it with the recitation

of the *lawan* and *Anand*. He retained the Brahmanical *Vedi*, the fire worship *Havan*, etc., perhaps as a compromise with the old Hindu system whose influence was too deep in his part of the country to be easily eradicated.

In 1861, Baba Darbara Singh paid a visit to Amritsar. Here he wished to perform the marriage of a couple, Mira Devi of Kala Gujran, district Jhelum, and Boota Singh, in front of the Akal Takht in the precincts of the Golden Temple. They had come all the way from their homes as desired by Baba Darbara Singh. The *Jathedār* of the Akal Takht and the Head *Granthi* of the Darbar Sahib did not permit him to do so. This was then the state of affairs in the holiest of the holy Sikh shrines. So predominant was the influence of the Brahmanicals there that he had to find another place in the city in the *dharmsala* of Mahant Dayal Singh to perform the marriage according to the *Gurmat*.

It was in these days that Bhai Jassa Singh, a *Granthi* of the Darbar Sahib, died on his bedstead. This was considered to be inauspicious by the old Brahmin-ridden people saying that Jassa Singh had died *be-gatā*, as unacceptable for honorable transmigration of his soul. According to them, he should have been laid on the ground with his head towards the north. This was being talked about throughout the city of Amritsar. On hearing of it, Darbara Singh went to the Akal Takht. Baba Khem Singh Bedi then happened to be sitting there. Baba Darbara Singh said that Jassa Singh was a devoted Sikh who regularly bathed in the tank or *Sarovar* of the Darbar Sahib, read the holy scripture daily and never failed in his morning and evening prayers. Such a pious person could certainly not be said to have died an evil death. Baba Khem Singh then said ; "What you say is right, but we are worldly people and have to live and die among, them" 'Baba Darabara Singh did not relish this compromising attitude of Baba Khem Singh Bedi and unhesitatingly said : "You claim to be the leader of the Sikhs; these words of yours would mislead these unsuspecting ignorant people." He then quoted the following lines of Guru Nanak :

ਜਾਲਉ ਐਸੀ ਰੀਤਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੈ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਵੀਸਰੇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਈ ਭਲੀ ਪਰੀਤਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸੇਤੀ ਪਤਿ ਰਹੈ ॥

Follow not the custom that maketh thee forsake the Lord,
Blessed is the love, sayeth Nanak, that maintaineth thy
honour with the Lord. (Vadhans Var, I, p. 590.)

Baba Darbara Singh greatly strengthened the Nirankari movement by his persuasive eloquence and through a number of missionary centres known as *Beera*. Before his death on Phagan 3, 1927 Bk. (February 12/13, 1870), he nominated his youngest brother Rattan Chand, popularly known as Ratta, to continue the work after him.

The new pontiff was a devoted Sikh and enthusiastic propagator of the Nirankari reforms. He spent the greater part of the first three years of his leadership in intensive study of the *Guru Granth Sahib* and other allied literature. The death of Baba Darbara Singh had provided the Brahmanical Hindus and the luke-warm Sikhs patronized by Baba Khem Singn Bedi to intensify their opposition to the Nirankari movement. Under their pressure some of the Nirankari missionaries or *Beeredars* had become lax in their duties and failed to regularly read, as desired by Baba Darbara Singh, the instruction or *hukamnamas* issued from the Nirankari headquarters. When this was brought to the notice of Baba Ratta, he reprimanded the negligent missionaries in his *hukom-nama* of April 11, 1873 (Baisakh 1, 1930 Bk.), for their compromising attitude to-wards the old Brahmanical rites and rituals in contradiction of the Nirankari reform of which they were expected to be enthusiastic propagators.

Baba Ratta also encouraged the establishment of some fifty gurdwaras in the Dhanni and Pothohar areas and introduced therein the holding of annual conferences on fixed dates for the propagation of Sikhism as a separate independent religion in the light of the teachings of Gurus Nanak and Gobind Singh. In these gurdwaras there was a regular reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, in addition to the recitation of the Sukhmani and other hymns and the service came to an end with *ardas*. On every alternative Sunday, it was imperative for the leader of the local congregation, the *beeredar*, to read there the Nirankari rules of conduct to keep the *Sangat* reminded of their duties and responsibilities. The evening service in the gurdwara consisted of the recitation of the *Rahiras* and

Sohila in addition to *kirtan* or the singing of hymns from the scripture.

He was opposed to the installation of Brahmanical idols of gods and goddesses in the Sikh gurdwaras as it was against the monotheistic teachings of the Gurus. Seeing such idols installed in the Panchayati gurdwara at Kirpa, Baba Ratta walked out of it along with the accompanying *Sangat* on the occasion of the death rites of Bhai Ram Singh, father of Roop Singh Nirankari. Later on Bhai Roop Singh and his brothers erected a new gurdwara at Kirpa where an annual mela was held on Phagan 8 and 9.

While the Nirankari leaders were successfully preaching the Sikh faith in the west and north-west of the Panjab, Baba Ram Singh Namdhari of Bhaini, with the inspiration received from Bhai Balak Singh of Hazro, brought back thousands of luke warm people to Sikhism in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the country. Like the Nirankari movement, his was also a purely religious movement aiming at the revival of the Sikh faith which, he felt, was fast declining not only among the masses but also among the custodians and managers of Sikh shrines. With the zeal of new converts, thousands of people gathered round him and attended his congregations at Bhaini and at the fairs and religious centres visited by him. Nothing objectionable, much less political, was to be found in his speeches, but as his movement, known as the Kooka or Namdhari, came to prominence soon after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, some of the British officers felt nervous over the behaviour of some of the Kookas who, in a state of frenzy, at times, took the law into their own hands, demolished and desecrated Hindu and Muslim places of worship and led murderous attacks on butchers. The attacks on cow-killing butchers was at worst a social crime born of mis-directed zeal for the protection of cows under the age-old Brahmanical prejudices. There was nothing rebellious in them. Moreover, Baba Ram Singh was absolutely innocent in the attack on Malerkotla butchers. He had neither sanctioned nor approved of the attack. He had, in fact, protested against it and had refused to accompany the attackers. And when he found that a group of Kookas had gone out of his

hand, he in all earnestness, sent a message to the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police at Ludhiana, requesting the *Sarkar* to make their own arrangements to maintain law and order. To hold such a noble and innocent soul responsible for the unlawful activities of some of his followers and to exile him away for life was the height of injustice and tyranny. The Government of India, however, soon discovered that the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana and the Commissioner of Ambala division had mishandled the Kooka situation, had exceeded their power and had unjustifiably blown away as many as sixty-five Kookas from the guns on January 17-18, 1872. Both of them were removed from service and were suitably punished.

The Government of the Panjab, however, kept the Kooka headquarters at Bhaini under strict surveillance and established a police post there. It was removed in 1922.

It is a great pity that the Namdhari movement which, under the fostering care of its great founders, Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh, aimed at restoring the Sikh faith to its original purity, has not been able to completely shake off the Brahmanical practices and rituals like untouchability, *Vedi*, *havan*, etc. Individually, some of the Namdharis are great devotees, to meditation and recitation of the sacred Name of the Lord, Unlike the Nirankaris, the Namdharis have developed into a sect, claiming for their leaders heritage direct from Guru Gobind Singh, the last Guru of the Sikhs, who died at Nander in the Deccan in October 1708.

With the exile of Baba Ram Singh Namdhari from the Panjab and hostile attitude of the Government towards his followers, their work in the field of religion came to a standstill. The reform-minded Sikh leaders of Amritsar, organized the Singh Sabha movement, with Sardar Thaker Singh Sandhanwalia as its president and *Giani* Gian Singh as its secretary, in 1873, two years before the establishment of the Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1875. The Singh Sabha of Amritsar, the Khalsa Diwan of Lahore and the

Chief Khalsa Diwan at Amritsar, with its Sikh Educational Committee, have rendered commendable service to the Sikh community throughout the country, particularly in the field of education. The Khalsa schools and colleges established under their lead and inspiration became, in a way, centres of Sikh missionary work and they had the fullest sympathy and co-operation of the leaders and followers of the Nirankari movement.

The Singh Sabha leaders encouraged the recruitment of the Sikhs in the Indian Army and, with the increase in their numbers, prevailed upon the Government to have separate Sikh regiments, with gurdwaras therein managed by Sikh *granthis* and supervised by senior Sikh officers. The Sikh soldiers were all expected to be regular in their attendance at the gurdwara where the *Granthi* regularly instructed them in the Sikh way of life and explained to them the hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *rahit* of the Khalsa as enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikh regimental gurdwaras thus indirectly became the centres of *Sikhi parchar*, and as these soldiers were free from non-Sikh influences, they became *pacca* in the observance of Sikh *rahit* and exercised a very healthy influence on their families and relatives whenever they came home either on leave or on retirement. Not only this. Their manly bearing and imposing personalities inspired other youngmen from amongst the Brahmins, Mahajans, Krars, etc., to join the ranks of the Khalsa to be able to enter into military service as Sikhs or to otherwise look like *Sardars*.

Some of the leading missionaries of the Singh Sabha like Bhai Dit Singh and Giani Thakar Singh were closely associated with the Nirankari leaders. The former is said to have spent some six months at Rawalpindi and felt inspired by the ceremonies performed at the Nirankari Darbar according to *Gurmat*.

Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha felt deeply interested in the reforms introduced by the Nirankaris and visited Rawalpindi some time in the first decade of the century

to have first-hand knowledge of the work being done by them for the revival of Sikhism in its original glory. He met Baba Ratta and his prominent associates and was greatly impressed by their sincerity and zeal. He asked them if he could be of any service to them. Baba Ratta explained that the biggest handicap in the way of the Sikh masses to accept the reforms, particularly in marriage ceremony, was the non-recognition of the *Anand* marriage by the law of the land, which had been framed on the basis of the age-old Hindu practice. It was freely broadcast by the anti-reform Brahmanicals, and was feared in Sikh circles, that, in case of an *Anand* marriage being challenged in a court of law, it might not be declared null and void, adversely affecting the right of inheritance. The Maharaja realized the genuineness of the fear, and on his return to Nabna asked his son Tikka Ripudaman Singh, who was then a member of the Viceroy's Council, to have the needful done. Tikka Sahib presented a bill in the Council to accord legal recognition to the *Anand* marriage among the Sikhs. It was later pushed forward by Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia with whose efforts it was passed as the Anand Marriage Act (VII of 1909) on October 22, 1909.)

To avoid any complication Baba Ratta nominated his son Baba Gurdit Singh, as his successor on October 29, 1907 (Katik 13, 1964 Bk.) and at the same time declared that he would in turn be followed by his son Hara Singh.

Baba Gurdit Singh occasionally attended the annual conferences and *melas* of the Nirankaris in Pothohar, but mostly Hara Singh represented him there and encouraged the *Sahajdhari* Nirankaris to grow hair and become regular *Singhs*. During his visit to Kirpa in 1910, on the occasion of Phagan 8 *mela*, it was brought to his notice at the time of the *langar* that his hosts Mulraj, Hari Chand and Pala Ram sold the forbidden tobacco at their shops. Pala Ram said that they did not smoke tobacco, but only sold it at their shop and had to touch it. Moreover, he was under

the impression that the restriction against touching it applied only to the *Amritdhari Singhs* and not to the *Sahajdhari* Sikhs. Baba Hara Singh disagreed with Pala Ram. To him, it was an obnoxious weed equally forbidden for both the Amritdharis and the Sahajdharis. After a couple of minutes' pause, he asked a Sikh to bring three combs from his trunk and gave it to them. He then asked the three brothers to tie up their hair like the Singhs and in future to observe the *rahit* of the *Amritdhari Singhs* after formal baptism. This inspired almost all the Sahajdhari Nirankaris to be formally baptized as the *Khalsa*.

By the end of the second decade of the century, demand for reform in the gurdwaras reached its highest peak. The cold-blooded massacre of some 130 Sikhs at Nankana Sahib on February 20, 1921, by *Mahant* Narain Das shocked the community, in fact the whole of the country, and called for immediate taking over of the control of the gurdwaras by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, organized for the purpose on November 15-16, 1920. The Nirankaris were in full sympathy with the aims and objects of the Committee, and their leader Baba Gurdit Singh was elected as member of its Working Committee.

On Phagan 4, 1978 BK. (February 15, 1922), was laid the foundation of the new building of the Nirankari Darbar at Rawalpindi. It was completed in December 1922 and was the highest building in the city.

During the 1946-1947 disturbances in Rawalpindi and the neighbouring areas, Baba Hara Singh rendered commendable service to the Hindus and Sikhs. When the disturbances began on March 5, 1947, Baba Hara Singh was at Gakkhar in the Fatehjang tehsil. The dislocated people gathered in the gurdwara and were brought safely to Rawalpindi via Fatehjang where they had to stay for three days. The Nirankari Darbar, the Shri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara and the adjoining buildings were the main rendezvous of the helpless refugees during those perilous days.

Baba Gurdit Singh died at Rawalpindi on April 26, 1947 (Baisakh 14, 2004 BK.) The city was then under curfew and it appeared difficult to convey the dead body for cremation to Dayalsar outside the city. The Deputy Commissioner, however, was greatly helpful in providing a strong police-guard for the funeral procession, and the cremation was performed at Dayalsar with all solemnity,

With the creation of Pakistan in August 1947 on religious basis, the Panjab was divided into two parts, with the result that the Hindu and Sikh population of the western Panjab was driven out into India, and most of the Nirankaris settled down in Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala, etc., etc. Some of them moved on to other parts of the country.

Baba Hara Singh, the successor of Baba Gurdit Singh, soon got in touch with Nirankaris scattered all over the country and held a conference of theirs in January 1948. This was the first of their annual conferences after the partition. Their annual and other periodical gatherings provide an excellent platform for the propagation of Sikhism. In recent years the Nirankaris have established their headquarters at Chandigarh, the foundation stone of which was laid by His Highness Maharaja Yadavindra Singh of Patiala on February 2, 1960 (Magh 20, 2016 BK.)

Baba Hara Singh died at Amritsar on January 15, 1971, and was cremated at Chandigarh on the premises of the Nirankari Darbar. He was succeeded by Baba Gurbakhsh Singh, the present head of the Nirankaris. Like his predecessors, he is a devoted Sikh, with full faith in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and is a strong advocate of the reforms introduced by his predecessors.

The Nirankaris, as mentioned earlier, are pure monotheists believing in the unity of God who, as stated in the opening lines of the Sikh Scripture, is the Creator of the Universe, Self-existent and Formless. They do not believe in any gods and goddesses and have full faith in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is their only scripture to be

relied upon for guidance in life and for the performance of ceremonies from birth to death, They recognize no distinctions of caste and creed and of high or low, and observe no untouchability like the Hindus. They perform no *Shradha* or feeding of priestly Brahmins for the benefit of their dead ancestors or relatives, nor do they recognize good and bad omens, or favourable or evil effects of stars on human lives and behaviour.

They perform their marriages according to the *Gurmat* in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and they are opposed to the exhibition of dowry. They do not consult Brahmins or astrologers for auspicious time for marriages, business, travelling, etc. Widow marriage is allowed but polygamy is prohibited. Instead of weeping and mourning on the occasion of a death, they take it as a natural occurrence in the Will of God and sing hymns from the holy scripture. Besides the usual Sikh places of historical and religious importance, Nirankaris look upon Dayalsar Gurdwara at Rawalpindi with special reverence. They generally greet one another with the words '*Dhan Nirankar*' and their *Ardas* begins with the words *Adi sat Nirankar da dhian dhar ke Guru Nanak lei dhyae*'...The Nirankari pontiffs are pure vegetarians. They eat no flesh and opium, nor do they drink any intoxicants like *bhang*, wine etc. Smoking is strictly prohibited among the Nirankaris. Generally speaking, they are honest and reliable businessmen, looking upon cheating and using false weights as peculiarly heinous crimes. They believe in living upon what they earn by the sweat of their brow and devote the offerings made to the *Guru Granth Sahib* on ceremonial and other occasions to religious and charitable purposes.

Note

THE PSEUDO—NIRANKARIS

Of late a schismatic group has grown out of the Nirankaris and is known as Sant Nirankari Mandal. It was organized by one *Bhai Buta Singh*, a *Ragi*, who could not adhere to the puritanic discipline of the original Nirankari Mission, and a friend of his *Bhai Avtar Singh*. *Bhai Buta Singh* died in 1943 at Murree. After the partition of India, *Avtar Singh* moved to Delhi in 1947, where, after his death he was

succeeded by his son, Gurbachan Singh, the present leader of the Mandal. Ganda Singh

II

Sant Nirankari Mandal

A Challenge for Indian Society*

The Sant Nirankari Mandal is comparatively a recent organisation. It has nothing to do with the historical Nirankari movement which originated in the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and now has its headquarters in Chandigarh with Baba Gurbax Singh as its spiritual leader. Its only link with the real Nirankari movement is that one Kahn Singh, a granthi of Baba Hara Singh had a special attachment to one Boota Singh, a tatoo master, who occasionally visited the Nirankari Darbar in Rawalpindi and performed *Kirtan* there. Subsequently this very Bhai Kahn Singh out of regard for his friend carried him on shoulders through the streets of Rawalpindi and proclaimed him a 'Guru.' Boota Singh was a habitual drinker and had been turned out from the Nirankari Darbar of Baba Hara Singh for violation of discipline. Since he was a good singer, he attracted a small following. One of his ardent devotees was Avtar Singh who ran a bakery shop first in Peshawar and later in Rawalpindi. Boota Singh nominated him as his successor in 1953. Avtar Singh shifted to Delhi after partition and set up the Sant Nirankari Mandal as a registered body in 1948 with an executive of seven members. He gave the 'Dal' a constitution and an organisational shape. He also prepared a special scripture for his followers under the title of "*Avtar Baani*. The following five principles were laid down as the fundamentals of the Dal :

1. Nothing is ours. All our possessions—physical, mental, material —are a divine loan which we must utilize only as trustees and not as masters.

* *Gurdwara Gazettee*, Amritsar, May 1978, pp. 11-14.

2. No discrimination based on caste, creed, colour, religion in our worldly status.
3. No criticism of any one's diet or dress.
4. No renunciation of the world.
5. No divulgence of Divine Secret of the '*Gian*' except with the permission of the True Master.

Avtar Singh, the head of the Dal was called *Shahanshah*, the *Jagat Pita* and was recognised as God Himself. His wife was given the title of *Jagat Mata*. The two stood for the sun and moon respectively. The members of the central executive were called 'Seven Stars.' Local branches were placed under the leadership of 'Parmukhs.'

It was a very closely knit society in which highest value was attached to the drinking of *Charnamrit*, footwash. Not only was the footwash of the Master distributed among the followers; the footwash of the *Jagat Mata*, the Seven Stars and the Parmukhs was also regarded as sacred and was distributed. A para-military organisation called Sewa Dal was created which now has a membership of over 7,000. The members, all bearing *lathis*, are trained, disciplined and controlled by a Commander-in-Chief called *Mukhya Shikshak*.

The present head, Gurbachan Singh, a business man of motor parts, succeeded his father in 1963.

In 1973 the Sant Nirankari Dal had 354 branches—27 abroad and the rest in India. The number has further increased since then. The total property of the Dal runs into crores. The head of the Dal lives luxuriously and moves about in a Mercedes car.

Although the ranks of Nirankaris are open to men of all religions and communities, the majority of them are drawn from the Hindus. There are over 80% of them in this organization, The Sikhs are only 7%. Other members are drawn from other communities.

By and large those members come from the petty trading classes who have acquired lot of wealth in recent years.

These Sant Nirankaris (*Nakli Narankaris*) are really a society of like minded people who have no faith in any matter of diet. They are opposed to any restriction whether they are

on food, liquors, meats and smoking. People can eat beef and yet no objection is raised to their being members of the Dal. Similarly liberty in sex relations has brought into its ranks a large number of people of doubtful character.

It is proclaimed that the principal aim of the Dal is to promote spiritualism, but what is really promoted is not spiritualism so much as a sort of fraternity promoting the family interests of the leaders of the Dal, particularly the Head of the Dal. For one thing, no rigorous discipline is thought necessary for the attainment of spiritualism. The whole task is accomplished in flash through a secret formula by the so-called Guru of the Dal. How much of spiritualism is gained thereby can better be imagined than described.

In their religious assemblies the holy scriptures of diverse religions are kept for reference and often quotations are given from them but they regard their own head as the *Real Sat Guru, as God Himself*, and thus do not show the respect which must be given to the scriptures. To the Sikhs particularly their behaviour is very objectionable because the Sikhs look upon their scriptures as the Eternal Guru after Guru Gobind Singh and cannot tolerate any individual or group showing any disrespect to their Holy *Granth*. But the votaries of other religions are also not happy with the manner in which their scriptures are kept in the Nirankari congregations.

Whatever may be its principles on paper, in actual practice the Sant Nirankari Dal (*Nakli Nirankari*) has become a challenge to all right thinking Indians. In the name of spiritualism and brotherhood of man, all moral values which are the bedrock of human society, particularly Indian society, have been thrown to the winds. Naturally this is causing a heavy damage to our society, to our whole valued system and it is high time that effective steps were taken by the Government as well as by the people to ban all these objectionable activities of these *Nakli Nirankaris*.

FAUJA SINGH

III

They Massacre Sikhs

On the 13th of April, 1978, the sacred day of Baisakhi for Hindus and Sikhs both, the day on which the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, finally shaped and completed the way of life for the Sikhs in 1699 by ordaining a political nation, of the apotheosis the Khalsa, assigning to the Sikh people the task of inserting themselves into History to bring about social changes and cultural trends, for the good and benefit of mankind, a dozen and a half men, the cream of the Sikhs were massacred by an organised band and with the tacit approval of the Policemen present, when these peaceful Sikhs were on their way to pre-arranged concourse and gathering of a new permissive sect where, admittedly, grave and malicious insults were being audaciously hurled against the Sikh religion and Sikh beliefs and sentiments, to dissuade these offenders from continuation of this anti-Sikh offensive. Earlier, one million Sikh pilgrims gathered at Amritsar on this sacred day, a day on which Jallianwala Bagh massacre had taken place in 1919, had pleaded in vain to certain Punjab State Ministers present and local government authorities, to stop the miscreants from indulging in their reckless and criminal activities of thus outraging the Sikh sentiments. Now, a selected batch of a few dozen prominent Sikhs marched bare-footed and unarmed to the gathering of these traducers of Sikhism, but they were stopped at a distance of over a hundred yards from their venue, for a period sufficient for a para-military platoon armed with lethal weapons, guns, revolvers acidfilled bottles and mechanically propelling implements for shooting poison-tipped arrows, to emerge from the Sikh-baiters' gathering and take positions behind a row of motor trucks already lined on the left side of the Sikh protest-marchers who in the meantime had been joined by some other Sikh pilgrims also. These Sikhs had, in the meanwhile, been persuaded by police officers on duty into believing that steps were being taken by the authorities to stop any further pro-

vocations to Sikh sentiments. Then the voice of the Chief of these Sikh-baiters was heard through the elaborate loud-speaker's system from within their *shamiana* saying : "These Sikhs think they can stop us from freely carrying out our programme. Let them know today how mistaken they are. Time has come to be active for those come here for this purpose". They briskly advanced towards the Sikh protesters and made a concerted attack on them, with bullets, acid-bottles and poisoned arrows. The police on duty then hurled tear-gas bombs against the unarmed Sikhs, ostensibly to disperse them, converting them into sitting ducks for their *Shikaris*. One of these hapless Sikhs, a highly devout, well known and well educated person, was wounded grievously though not fatally with multiple bullet wounds when an attacker shot at him at close-range. Before this *coup de grace*, however, the Sikh was informed by his killer that, "you are a really troublesome person". Thus died Fauja Singh.

Aftermath

It did not take long for this drama to reach its denouement. A dozen and a half Sikhs lay dead on the spot riddled with bullets. Over forty Sikhs received serious injuries with bullets, sharp-edged weapons and blunt lathis, and another one hundred Sikhs received injuries requiring trained medical attention. Some passers by, including a Muslim labourer, is amongst the dead and three of the dead persons are claimed by the Sikh-baiters as belonging to their own "religious" persuasion, though the Sikh-baiters have failed to come forward to support it by having a formal case registered with police for proper investigation. It is widely rumoured that many dead bodies of the Sikhs were taken into possession by their killers and dragged into their enclosure, but no trace is available of them. The huge gathering of the Sikh-baiters that was scheduled to be formally addressed by a Punjab State non-Sikh Minister and an influential non-Sikh Jullundur newspaper magnate, continued undisturbed for about three hours even after this massacre of the Sikhs, a hundred yards away, and the instigator and organizer of this

holocaust, the presiding deity of this Sikh baiters' organization, was leisurely and safely escorted out of Punjab with high government officers respectfully acting as his escort. On reaching Delhi, he had ready interview with the Prime Minister of India to demand full arrangements to be made at State level guaranteeing his personal and his followers' safety. A case for conspiracy to commit wilful murder of Sikhs on the 13th of April, 1978, at Amritsar has been registered by the local police authorities and caches of lethal weapons and other arms have been recovered from their Amritsar meeting place and other organizational centres of these Sikh-baiters. A number of suspects have been arrested and detailed in judicial lock-up for further action.

Its True Shape

The Government handout describes this pre-planned massacre of the Sikhs as a "clash", and the Press refers to the killed and injured Sikhs as "Nihangs" and their killers as "Nirankaris." This is quite in keeping with an age-old practice, to place the truth on the scaffold and falsehood on the throne, to protect the vested interests of the establishment and to crucify the innocent victims, but the good people and men of good will would want to know the truth sought to be masked with duplicity and equivocation.

The Killer and The Killed

A "clash" is where two objects or factions strike noisily against each other. Where the striking and the sound is wholly one-sided, there is no "clash", and yet the Punjab Government hand-outs and almost the entire non-sikh press of our country refers to this massacre of Sikhs as a "clash". As the facts are, almost all the dead persons of this "clash" are the members of the Sikh protesters batch, each one of them an educated, well employed citizen and a disciplined dedicated and devout Sikh, barring a stray Muslim labourer, and two or three other passersby, whom now the killers claim as their own but decline to have their claim properly investigated though the authorities have publicly invited them to

have their case registered in accordance with law. All the killed Sikh protesters have been found as unarmed wearing sheathed short-sized religious symbols, *Kirpan* unsuitable for chopping even vegetables. It was, thus, a "clash" such as occurred in 1919 A. D. at the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar on the Baisakhi day, between the peaceful Indian citizens assembled to protest against the outrageous Rowlatt Act and the fully armed Gurkha soldiers of General Dyer.

Bad Name

The killed Sikh protesters are almost invariably referred to, in the non-sikh Press and the other national media, as Nihangs, "armed with traditional weapons," and the killers are, with unconcealed solicitude, described as Nirankaris, "the worshippers of the formless God." Weapons can kill the innocent and the unarmed, but words are much stronger and deadlier for the Word was in the Beginning and the words can conceal the murder and protect the murderer and make him look like injured innocence itself.

The Nihangs

What is a *nihang* ? Nihangs are the traditional remnants of the holy militia of Guru Gobind Singh who dress in their ancient dark blue uniforms and carry their traditional arms, mainly a spear, a sword and quoitus and emblems of their inner dedication to the Sikh religion. For the last three centuries, they have lived a semi-monastic, dedicated life, in this style, under the British rule and ever since. They lead peaceful and disciplined lives and even during the Sikh hegemony and sovereignty in the north of India, they were never known to have committed an act of unprovoked violence or wanton killing. Their spirit of public-service, their deathless daring and matchless bravery in battle, has invariably won unqualified praise and approbation from friends and foes in the past. Nihangs are no outlandish outlaws and anti-social desperadoes as a section of the Jullundur Press paints them. Amongst those killed on the 13th April, 1978, at Amritsar,

there was found not a single *nihang*, unless every citizen who does not keep a shingled and bare head wears dark coloured dustconcealing Indian garb, does not wear a loose *dhoti* and shave his beard, is to be castigated as a "Nihang" and condemned as a potential criminal in our free India. Who are these killers of the Sikhs almost reverently referred to as *Nirankaris*. the "worshippers of the formless God," is, however, another story.

True Nirankaris

In the late twenties and the early thirties of the nineteenth century, there arose and flourished a Sikh puritanical movement in the northwestern provinces of the Sikh Commonwealth, the *Sarkar-i-Khalsa*, the adherents of which movement, called themselves *nirankaris*, following the first description that Guru Nanak gave of himself. "Nanak, the Nirankari": "I am Nanak, the worshipper of the formless God." "This movement is not a separate sect of Sikhism; they practise the principles of Sikhism with unwavering devotion and without laxity. After the expulsion of the Sikhs from what is now Pakistan, the headquarters of these true Nirankari Sikhs shifted from Rawalpindi to Chandigarh and they now live in the Indian Punjab and the rest of India, hard-working and prosperous, indistinguishable from the general mass of the Sikh community, except by their marked piety and devotion to religion. Their basic slogan is : *dhann nirankar, deha dhari sabh khwar*, that is, "All praise to the formless God; all forms are perishable." In the second part of this slogan, the students of comparative Religions will detect the echo of the basic Buddhist 'noble truth,' *sab anitta*, or an affirmation of last words of Gautam the Budha *vvadhamma-sankhara* : 'all aggregates must disintegrate,' which is also the true Sikh doctrine. The first part of this slogan is the common ground between all higher religions, the Vedic religion, Brahmanism, Islam and Judaism including Sikhism and the first part of this slogan, *dhann nirankar* has also been adopted by the Sikh-baiters and pseudo-nirankaris, but with the tongue in their cheek, for they supplement this

slogan by adding : *aiya guru bachan avtar, sare jag da palanhar*, "God has descended to human form as Gurbachan Singh the Light and Guide of mankind and he is the Sustainer of the entire universe." A few words are necessary about the genesis, geneology and doctrines and practices of this 'Sustainer of the entire Universe,' Gurbachan Singh, the Chief of the Sikh-baiters at Amritsar, and his followers.

Pseudo-Nirankaris

One Buta Singh (1883-1944) was a paid hymn-singer at the Rawalpindi headquarters of the true *nirankaris*, but was dismissed and expelled from their congregations on account of his excessive addiction to alcohol and lax morals. He tried to set up a rival or separate *nirankari* congregation at Peshawar, to eke out a living but met with no success and died in penury with a revolting disease. He gathered another unemployed companion, Avtar Singh by name, who was making a precarious living by baking bread and selling his own products as a pedler in the streets of Peshawar till 1947, when he migrated to Delhi as a refugee. The common bond, between Buta Singh and this Avtar Singh, was their partiality for alcohol and sex and their firm conviction that men are easiest to dupe in the name of religion leading to easy money and sumptuous living. The 'success' that had evaded Avtar Singh in the pre-partition Punjab smiled at him in Delhi where he rented a small tenement in the Paharganj area and publicised through agents paid on commission-basis, that he, Avtar Singh could reveal the 'Face of God' to anybody at a short notice and for a moderate fee. Miserable refugees from western Pakistan, hapless and haggard, fell an easy prey to one who promised instant peace of mind, for a small fee, but without demanding any curbs of self-discipline or self-denial. A new religion was born, the cardinal doctrines of which were as simple as simplicity and as acceptable as sin. This Avtar Singh died in 1969 at Delhi afflicted with cancer and other revolting diseases after proclaiming that his son, Gurbachan Singh, aged 17 then, was the God Almighty. The widow-wife of his mentor, Buta Singh, burnt herself to death under Avtar Singh's roof, under

mysterious circumstances. This new 'religion' of libertinism and permissiveness has three basic tenets, proclaimed openly, solemnly and authoritatively, through the written and the spoken word: (1) Believe that Avtar Singh and subsequently his son, Gurbachan Singh, is God Almighty in human form, having the authority and charisma of all the past prophets of mankind out of whom Moses, Mohammad, Christ, Krishna, Rama and Guru Nanak are specifically mentioned by name. In the *Illustrated weekly*, Bombay, 24th October, 1971, this claim is clearly made. (2) There is no sin that can touch or tarnish those who cherish full faith in the cent per cent Divinity of Avtar Singh and his progeny. In an officially sponsored writeup about Gurbachan Singh, published in the *Illustrated weekly*, Bombay, issue of 24th October, 1971, a prominent follower of this modern religion tells us.

Before I was converted to this new faith, I was an agnostic (i. e. a misguided Sikh). Gurbachan Singh has completely changed my psyche. I now freely consume beef and pork. I also freely indulge in spirits and wines. This makes no deleterious effect on my inner purity. (as reproduced in the *Nakli Nirankari*, ibid., p. 126)

Likewise, in the divinely inspired *anubhavi gyan*, of the *Sant Nirankari* issue of June, 1964 (p. 16) we are informed that the followers of Gurbachan Singh are beyond good and evil, free from moral controls and social censure :

“My blessed followers are free to indulge in whatever they desire. Nothing is pure ; nothing is impure All fellow-believers tread this straight path.”,

The third tenet of this modern religion is a logical corollary. (3) The only thing forbidden to the followers of this new 'religion' is, social censure of any fellow-believer for whatever he may or may not do in his personal life. All these three doctrines are unambiguously and repeatedly proclaimed and reiterated in the authoritative and official

ਜੋ ਜੀ ਚਾਹੇ ਸੋ ਖਾਂਦੇ ਨੇ । ਜੋ ਜੀ ਚਾਹੇ ਸੋ ਪੀਂਦੇ ਨੇ । ਕੋਈ ਜੁਠਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੋਈ ਸੁੱਚਾ ਨਹੀਂ
ਇਹ ਇਕੋ ਪਿਆਲੇ ਪੀਂਦੇ ਨੇ ।

corpus of writings of these pseudo-nirankaris, their ghost-written scripture, *Avtar-Bani* and their official periodical *Sant Nirankari*. The *Avtar-Bani* a book of cheap contents crude Punjabi diction proclaims this 'divine revelation' for enlightenment of the modern man : "In the Beginning, in the middle and at the end of all things, Formless God is ever and for evermore... He is the creator-omniscient under the name and style of Avtar Singh. The Mother of the Universe (Mrs. Avtar Singh) therefore, would have everyone know that Gurbachan Singh is the only true guide and Light for mankind, for he is verily the God Almighty incarnate." May 1964 issue (p. 9) of the Official publication of the 20th Century world-religion informs all and sundry that "Avtar Singh is Allah returned to Earth and God also has been brought along. Rama frolics in his lap, for, he, Avtar Singh, is the One and only God the Lord come down to Earth." **Again, February, 1966, issue of this periodical reveals the fundamental truth. He is (as Avtar Singh), the Creator of the world. He is the only ever-lasting and undying one, all else is perishable."***But off and on, the current 'Sustainer of the entire Universe, Gurbachan Singh, makes such statements in Press and on platform as he finds necessary to tide over a particular situation, which statement is supposed to have no binding force on him or his followers, since he is, *exhypothesis*, immaculate and utterly pure and no sin can touch or

* ਆਦਿ ਮਧ ਤੇ ਅੰਤ ਤਕ ਕਾਇਮ ਹੈ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ।

.....ਆਪੇ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਕਰ ਰਿਐ ਨਾ ਰੱਖ ਕੇ ਅਵਤਾਰ । ਜਗਤ ਮਾਤਾ ਨੇ ਜਗਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਹਾ
ਅੰਤ ਪੁਕਾਰ । ਗੁਰਬਚਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਜਗਤ ਦਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੈ ਅਵਤਾਰ ।

** ਅਲਾਹ ਆਪੇ ਮੁੜ ਆਇਆ ਜੇ ।

ਗਾਡ ਵੀ ਨਾਲ ਲਿਆਇਆ ਜੇ ।

ਰਾਮ ਭੀ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਬੁਕਲ ਖੋਲ੍ਹੇ ।

ਇਹ ਰੱਬ ਆਪੇ ਹੈ ਆਇਆਂ ॥

*** ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਵਾਲਿਓ ਦੱਸਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਗੱਲ ਇਕੋ,

ਇਹ ਬੈਠਾ ਜੇ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਾ ।

ਸਦਾ ਏਸੇ ਨੇ ਕਾਇਮ ਤੇ ਦਾਇਮ ਰਹਿਣਾ

ਬਾਕੀ ਜੱਗ ਹੈ ਆਉਣ ਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲਾ ।

tarnish his followers. The late Avtar Singh was a self-confessed wholly illiterate and ignorant person but he was amply endowed with shrewdness of a petty pedlar. His 'scripture' was ghosted by a cheap pen-pusher whose identity is known. The current "Sustainer of the entire Universe," Gurbachan Singh, is a motor-mechanic by training and his educational progress did not proceed beyond upper Primary standard, an admission he has repeatedly made in public statements and through his official periodical. The followers that he gathered around himself remained limited in number till about ten years ago when he was catapulted into a world-figure overnight, with branches of his 'Mission' in over a hundred countries and with huge activity-centres and properties throughout India. His private and family assets are now believed to be computable in millions of rupees. High politics, secret and practically unlimited patronage and resources, have endowed Gurbachan Singh with vast affluence and power that he, today, enjoys.

Moral Decay

This, however, Gurbachan Singh's phenomenal access to affluence and power, popularity and prestige, is not a point of contention between Gurbachan Singh, his followers and the Sikhs. Nor is the moral laxity unbridled permissiveness and disintegrative malaise which he and his movement foster in society is a direct issue between the Sikhs and these pseudo-nirankaris. Retreat from religious and absolute moral values is a world-wide phenomenon and permissiveness, sex-promiscuity, moral laxity and social disintegration is by no means peculiar to India today; the phenomenon is world-wide and ecumenical, the reasons for which are deep-seated and historical. Nor is this phenomenon exceptional to modern times. It erupts whenever there is an onset of decay and deterioration in social cohesiveness and moral vitality of culture or civilization. Edward. Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, has noted emergence of all sorts of sects and societies, 'oriental religions,' as he calls them, when

* *Sant Nirankari, ibid.*, April October, November, 1964.

the Roman Empire weakened and disintegrated. A situation developed, he states, in which 'every teacher, either of truth or of falsehood, every founder, whether of a virtuous or a criminal association, might easily multiply his disciples or accomplices.' In *Bhagvadgita*, we are told that 'as moral decay sets in, men take to adulation of and subservience to mortal humans and abandon worship of the unseen God :'' *sivenam puja parityaiye manussanam upasanam*. The Sikh pious texts of Bhai Gurdas (d.1637) tell us that the fruit of moral decay is that "all social censure and absolute moral judgement disappears and men become playthings of their own passing fancies and corruptive passions, "*Koi Kisai na varjai soi karai joi man bhavai*. Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) provides us with a key to an understanding of utter moral decay and degradation by revealing that 'there shall arise an Absolute God in every house, altogether contemptible and degraded men these : '*ghar ghar hoe bahenge rama, tinu te sari hai na kou kama*. Have our pseudo-nirankaris taken their cue from *Bhagvadgita*, Bhai Gurdas and Guru Gobind Singh, in founding their new 'religion for the modern miserable man, in utter contempt of the voice behind the *Bhagvadgita*, the Inspiration behind Bhai Gurdas and the Light in Guru Gobind Singh ? Shri Dina Nath, Sidhantankar, an eminent writer, in the April 1973 issue of the Hindi monthly *Jana Gyan* (p.30) tells us that 'there is a deluge of bogus-gods-incarnate and fake *gurus* in India, these days. Currently, there are over two hundred and fifty persons thriving in India who claim to be *gurus* or god-incarnate. Some of them stake the claim that they are the Supreme God, Vishnu ; others proclaim that they are the god of gods Siva, and still others assert that they are incarnations of Shri Rama Chandra, Lord Krishna, or the final incarnation heralding the end of the World, Immaculate Kalki."

The Issue

The issue between the Sikhs and Gurbachan Singh and his caucus is three-fold. (1) The main thrust of this movement is basically anti-Sikhism and its permissiveness and

promiscuity is merely secondary. (2) Its methodology is denigration and coarse ridicule of Sikh doctrines and practices and malicious outraging of Sikh religious sentiment and insulting Sikh religious beliefs. (3) Its dynamism is politics, promoted and prompted by political power that aims at degrading and demoralising the Sikh people permanently, to deprive them of the control of their own history and their spiritual potential and thus reducing them into secondary citizens in India and their camp-followers, so as, eventually, to divest them of their living separateness, shrinking them into a footnote in History. Let this be explained briefly.

Sikh-Baiting

The Chief of these pseudo-nirankaris strictly observes the outward garb and forms of a saintly Sikh and so do his aides and lieutenants. And not without malice aforethought. Till only recently, their public gatherings were invariably centred around the ceremonious instalation of the Sikh scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*, that the Sikhs revere as the visible symbol and form of the Light of God, accessible to man in the forms of the Guru's Word and Testament. This Sikh doctrine and faith forestalls by five centuries, the latest modern development in European religious thought (Karl Barth, 1886-1968) that recognises distinction between the Word and religion by accepting that while the former is God's selfrevelation to man, the latter is the product of human culture and aspirations and is not to be identified with saving revelation, for, salvation can come only from God and not from man. Almost all these pseudo-nirankaris are ignorant, unlettered commonality, familiar with nothing about religion and sophisticated thought except the port-manteau jargon of Sikhism in Lewis Carroll's sense of a word packed with sense and sound of many words, capable of being employed successfully for ridiculing and creating confusion about Sikhism. In their writings and preachings their main and primary concern and pre-

occupation is to misinterpret and to corrupt Sikh doctrines and Sikh beliefs and thus to insult and denigrate the Sikh scripture publicly. This nefarious and criminal game has been going on for the last twenty or so years and has given rise to many near-riot scenes between the Sikhs and these Sikh-baiters. In their gatherings they display the Sikh scripture in traditional ceremonial robes as Sikhs do, but degrade it by placing it on a lower level platform than the one on which their chief or their main preacher seats himself. No graver provocation can be offered to Sikh religious sentiments, when these antics are publicly and maliciously indulged in. A parallel would be, if a non-Hindu religious preacher placed a Hindu ikon or sacred idol under his feet in public and then unfavourably commented upon the religious concept implicit in this ikon or idol. The grave provocation involved is equal in magnitude to the insult to Hindus and Hinduism that Mahmud of Ghazni offered, by carrying the sacred *lingam* of Somanath to the Jami mosque of his capital to place it on its footsteps for being treaded over by Muslim worshippers, in the 12th century. The point is not that the Sikhs demand or expect everybody to accept the Sikh scripture the way the Sikhs regard it; the point is that they resent its public profanation and calculated insult to it by others. (2) In their writings and in their preachings they pretend to pick up a text out of the sacred Sikh scripture to explain and comment upon it as Sikhs do in their congregations, and then ridicule, twist and misinterpret it by design. The exegesis of the sacred text is invariably prefaced by the remark: "This fellow here says": *Kahinda hai*, a gross form of disrespect and insult to the Sikh prophets and seers through whom the Sikh revelations are indicated in their scripture as having been manifested. This gross insult is repeated publicly on every occasion, in word and in writing. In the June, 1964, issue of their official publication, the *Sant Nirankari*, this *kahinda hai* insult is reproduced as having come out of the mouth of 'God Almighty'

Avtar Singh, himself. (3) Such commentaries, when reproduced in the *Sant Nirankari* and their other publications always bear the caption : "Testament by the True King." *Vichar Sri Sacha Patshah*. The Sikhs have traditionally referred to their Gurus and prophets as *sacha patshah*, the Spiritual Master, and these pseudo nirankaris have appropriated this title for their Chief deliberately to substitute him for the Sikh Gurus and to outrage maliciously the Sikh religious beliefs. (4) In their gatherings and concourses they frequently refer to the Sikh scripture as,* a big bulky, useless volume of miscellaneous writings, "potha," a didactic miscellany"*** in contradistinction to a compendium of sacred texts, just to outrage the religious beliefs and feeling of the Sikhs. In June, 1973, at Nagpur, the wife of Gurbachan Singh, who is pompously styled as *Rajmata*, the Queen Mother, made a public speech in which she said that, "My husband alone is the Deliverer of Mankind in this Age; he alone can emancipate you. No useless and pointless big, bulky volume of so called Divine Testaments (here she pointed towards the Sikh scripture) can do you any good."*** In the August, 1964, issue of the *Sant Nirankari*, the Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*, is described as, a "book containing writings of 70-72 (*sic.*, actually, 35) educated persons who believed in no religion or dharma." In this issue, the president of the Nirankari Mission, the Delhi-based Supreme organization of these pseudo-nirankaris, further asserts that all writings in the *Sant Nirankari* are "divinely revealed," *anubhavi gyan*, of the identical order as is claimed for the Sikh sacred texts of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. (5) In the June, 1964, issue of the *Sant Nirankari*, in an essay, "What is true Revelation," *gurbani ki hai*, it is said about *Guru Granth Sahib* as follows :

* Partap Singh, Giani, *Nakli Nirankari*, IV ed. 1975, Amritsar, p., 95

** *ibid.* p. 90

*** *Ibid.* , p. 95

“How can any sensible person call the writings in this big bulky Miscellany as Divine Revelation? True, it contains didactic material but nothing more.”*

In the April, 1964, issue of this journal (p. 310) a follower of the ‘Sustainer of the entire Universe.’ Gurbachan Singh, records his confession of conversion to this new religion thus :

“I, the lowliest of the lowlies, was much devoted to diligent study of the Sikh scripture. This craze is now all over. It will surprise all except my fellow-nirankaris, for, they might wonder, how such a change is possible.”**

These instances of anti-Sikh dynamism and stances of this new religion are just illustrative and an exhaustive list will require a large-size book.

Provocation

The methodology evolved and constantly practised to insult Sikh beliefs and institutions and to provoke publicly Sikh religious susceptibilities is no less crude and extensive. (1) The congregations of these pseudo-nirankaris, whether in the presence of Gurbachan Singh, the ‘Sustainer of the entire Universe,’ or otherwise, invariably begin and end with hymn-singing the *sabad kirtan* mode of Sikh worship, and in these hymn-singing session the sacred and pious Sikh texts are intermixed and entwined with anti-sikhism and to insult its sacrosanct dignity. This mock *kirtan* thus becomes, of the *genere* of the anti-Christ Black Mass, of medieval Christian history not enacted in secret privacy like the Black Mass, but publicly, in centres of dense Sikh populations and on occasions of traditional Sikh religious gatherings, to insult Sikh religion, to mock at Sikh practices and to provoke Sikhs into violent protest or dishonourable submission. These

* ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਧਾਰਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਏਡੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਿਸ ਤਰਾਂ ਕਹਿ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ, ਹਾਂ ਲਿਖਤ ਤੇ ਨਸੀਹਤਾਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹਨ ।ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਦੀ ਅਵਾਜ਼ ਹੈ । (ਪੰ. 28)

** ਦਾਸ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਦਾ ਸ਼ੌਕ ਸੀ । ਉਹ ਸਭ ਹੁਣ ਖਤਮ ਹੋ ਚੁਕਾ ਹੈ । ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੀ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਇਲਾਵਾ ਬਾਕੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਹੈਰਾਨ ਹੋਣਗੇ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਸਚ ਮੁਚ ਖਤਮ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ ?

hymn-singing sessions end, invariably, with their litany;

“Gurbachan Singh is the Descent of Divinity on Earth.

He is the Sustainer of the entire Universe. (O, Gurbachan) Your Will is the sole Goodness,
For, you are the eternal living God.”*

The last two lines of this litany are from the Sikh Scripture’ *Guru Granth Sahib*, which enunciate that God’s will is the Matrix and final Test of human ethical judgement and He is the eternal Living God. The first two lines are a piece of crude versification in the *Avtar-bani* of these pseudo-nirankaris and by joining these two couplets the Sikh sacred text has been grossly profaned and put into service of deification of Gurbachan Singh. Nothing could be conceived as more provoking to the Sikh religious sentiments, As the April, 1972 issue (p. 26) of the *Sant Nirankari* shows, the pious text of Bhai Gurdas, *ishar pir jagat gur baba*, ‘Guru Nanak is the living Light and Guide of mankind’ has been perverted by these pseudo-nirankaris into *zahar pir Gurbachan Baba*, (Baba) Gurbachan is the Light Guide of mankind.’ (2) Gurbachan Singh has given title-names to certain of his followers in mock imitation of Sikh heirarchy of Prophets and Saints. His wife is ceremonially addressed as Mata Tripta. the name of the mother of Guru Nanak. His son has been actually named Gobind Singh not as mark of reverence for Guru Gobind Singh as many Sikhs do, but as a mockery of the last Sikh Prophet. On the Baisakhi (13th April) of 1973 at Hoshiarpur, in Punjab, this Gurbachan Singh, who has named his son as Gobind Singh, created a serious riot by stating in a public gathering that “Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikh Prophet knew nothing about spiritualism or devotion to God; he was just a common hunter, a *shikari* of birds and animals.” So, he could not have named his son, Gobind Singh, in any spirit of reverence towards the Sikh Prophet; it has been done, demonstrably, in mock-

* ਆਇਆ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਚਨ ਅਵਤਾਰ, ਸਾਰੇ ਜਗ ਦਾ ਪਾਲਣ ਹਾਰ ।
ਜੋ ਤੁਧ ਭਾਵੇ ਸਾਈ ਭਲੀਕਾਰ, ਤੂੰ ਸਦਾ ਸਲਾਮਤ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ।

ing contempt of the Sikh Prophet. On the same occasion, this Gurbachan Singh gratuitously said that when the Sikhs reverently gather to clear the silt out of the (holy) lake at Amritsar, *karseva* in fact they are engaging in a stupid and futile labour, *bekar-seva*, like sensible persons. he and his followers ran away into safety when public feelings violently erupted against his crude profanities of and malicious insults to Sikh religion; He has conferred the ceremonial names and titles of Baba Budha, (the Sikh patriarch), Bebe Nanaki (the sister of Guru Nanak), Bhagat Kabir (the revered saint of Sikhology) Mira Bai (the peerless God-intoxicated medieval princess) and so on and so forth, on his certain followers, men and women, to know whom is to know what malice and contempt resides in the bosom of this man against Sikhism and the galaxy of Sikh saints. (3) As reported in the April 1961 issue of the *Sant Nirankari* (p. 7, Avtar Singh, in a public gathering at Delhi on the 27th February, 1966, proclaimed that

“While Guru Gobind Singh had ordained only Five Beloved Ones as the founding members of the Khalsa, the apotheosis of Sikhism, I, Avtar Singh, have now ordained Seven Beloved Ones.”

Gurbachan Singh, the son and successor of Avtar Singh, has now renamed these Seven Beloved Ones as Seven stars, *Satt Sitaras*, betraying his deep attachment to the movie-cult and great interest in cine-literature. Incidentally, on the fateful day of the 13th April, 1978, this Gurbachan Singh was taken in a huge procession, under Government license and police protection, through the winding streets of the holy city of Amritsar, and throughout, *enroute*, it was being repeatedly proclaimed on the loud-speaker, addressing a million-strong Sikh pilgrims “Behold, Baba Gurbachan Singh, the real Guru of the age who is competent to release Sikhs from the bonds of transmigration. While Guru Gobind Singh could ordain only Five Beloved Ones, he, Gurbachan Singh, has ordained Seven Stars for emancipation of mankind.” It was this grave provocation, audaciously offered to the gathe-

red Sikh pilgrims at Amritsar on this fateful day that outraged the Sikh religious feelings and on learning that this Gurbachan Singh and his followers were repeating this and other similar insults to the Sikh religion and sentiments, a batch of respectable and disciplined devoted Sikhs, marched in protest to the venue of Gurbachan Singh's gathering and were stopped by the policemen on duty, more than a hundred yard away, till by a pre-concerted attack by organized private militia of Gurbachan Singh, these unsuspecting Sikhs were massacred, the police as it were, lending a helping hand by tear-gassing the Sikh protesters. (4) When the Fifth Nanak Guru Arjun (1563-1606) established Amritsar as the centre of Sikh religion, the first sacred tank he got dug up was *Santokhsar*. Avtar Singh has recently dug up a ditch at his headquarters at Delhi and has named it *santokhsar*, with the deliberate and malicious intention of insulting the Sikh religion. (5) *Mahapursha* is a Buddhist appellation for a perfected fully integrated man as the opposite number of the vedic *Arya*, the noble man. *Brahmagyani* is the Upanisadic term for the highest, spiritually evolved soul. In sikhism both these words are transvalued and reinterpreted as identical in content, designating a 'Perfected man,' *Insanul-kamal* of the eleventh century Muslim philosopher, Abdul Karim Jill, and in the Sikh scripture, *Mahapurash* and *brahmagyni* are interchangeably employed to denote a fully evolved and spiritually perfected man. The Vedic concept of *arya* is not inducted into Sikh religious terminology owing to its undertones of caste and distinction by birth. The pseudo-nirankaris, through their chiefs, the father & the son, Avtar Singh and Gurbachan Singh, have entitled a few dozens of their followers as *mahapurashs* or *brahmagyanis*, all hawkers, and petty traders, rustics and ignoramuses, decrepit social drop-outs and rejects. In their congregations and public gatherings, these persons are presented to the audience with the object and intention of mocking at Sikhism and insulting Sikh doctrines and beliefs. (6) In 1972, Gurbachan Singh, to outdo the Agha Khan and, Asiatic emperors and magnates of the past ages, had himself publicly weighed

against bundles of Reserve Bank of India paper currency. Whether this weighing ceremony was a proof positive of the divinity of Gurbachan Singh or merely a device to convert smuggled money or secret funds into white, legitimate money is not a direct issue between the Sikhs and Gurbachan Singh's caucus. Photographs of this Royal and spectacular ceremony widely appeared in the Press and these photos carried a caption, *ape kanda tol taraji ape tolan-hara*. This is a text from *Guru Granth Sahib (Suhi, I)* Wherein the Sikh scripture, in reference to the human numerous experience of God, poses the question :

“Who shall measure the glory of God and weigh His greatness, Who the supervisor and Which the weighing apparatus ?”

And the answer is given in the above quoted text :

“Who else but God Himself can be the measurer and weigher, the weighing machine and the supervisor, because, as it is, human mind is purblind and feeble, human reason self limited, and capable of moving only on set-rails, infected with distracting mercuriality and alienated from its Base.”*

Gurbachan Singh and his cronies have, in this instance, not only fully equated Gurbachan Singh with God the Almighty, and the Transcendent but, in the process, have denigrated the Sikh vision of God, the Sikh understanding of the human existential situation, with evil and malicious intention of confounding and outraging the religious feelings of the Sikhs. Such instance and antics of these enemies of Sikhism are there in any number but the point has been made that the ‘religion’ which Gurbachan Singh and his late father, preach and have preached is no religion at all. A religion deals with sacred, (a) the sacred as forbidden, (b) the sacred

* ਆਪੇ ਕੰਡਾ ਤੋਲ ਤਰਾਜੀ ਆਪੇ ਤੋਲਨਹਾਰਾ ।
 ਆਪੇ ਦੇਖੇ ਆਪੇ ਬੂਝੇ ਆਪੇ ਹੈ ਵਣਜਾਰਾ ॥
 ਅੰਧਲਾ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਪਰਦੇਸੀ ਖਿਨ ਆਵੇ ਤਿਲ ਜਾਵੇ ।
 ਤਾਂ ਕੀ ਸੰਗਤ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਹਦਾ ਕਿਉ ਕਰਿ ਮੂੜਾ ਪਾਵੇ ॥

as mysterious, (c) the sacred as secret and (d) the sacred as potent, but the pseudo-nirankari cult deals with no secret, sacred mystery and is exclusively concerned with earthly pleasures and gratification of human passions. Religion is an ensemble of scruples; a repudiation of all scruples is plain anti—religion, that is, pseudo-nirankaris. This cult, besides, is demonstrably a conspiracy and facade for destroying Sikhism through a crude methodology of corrupting and insulting Sikhism and outraging Sikh beliefs. How can such a criminal and cruel enterprise be protected by or seek protection under Article 25 of the Constitution of India, as is being demanded? The Article 25 lays down that, “Freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion” is constitutionally guaranteed in India “subject to decency, law and order and public morality.” The ‘religion’ and activities of Gurbachan Singh cannot at all, attract this provision as applicable to their case.

Political Game

The real political dynamism behind this high conspiracy to demoralise and destroy Sikhism as a world religion and to liquidate Sikhs as a political people, has been well-known in knowledgeable circles for the last over a dozen years, but there has been a conspiracy of silence, to keep mum over it by the national media and the political power-weilders, for reasons of expediency. In an early last week of April, 1978, issue, of the Chandigarh based, the Daily *Indian Express*, however, a public-spirited Hindu leader, Sat Pal Baghi of Ferozepore, has spelt out briefly some of the unvarnished truth, as follows :—

“The genesis of the real trouble between the Nirankaris and Akalis goes back to the years when Mrs. Indra Gandhi headed the Union Government. She wanted to weaken the Shiromani Akali Dal but found that Akalis could not be brought to heel. She thought of an elaborate plan to strengthen the Nirankari sect not only in Punjab but throughout the country and abroad also. Official patronage was extended to the

Nirankaris much to the chagrin of Akalis who have always considered the Nirankaris as heretics.

In pursuit of this policy of divide and rule, Mrs. Gandhi personally gave clearance for a diplomatic passport to be issued to the Nirankari Chief and the Indian High Commissioners and Ambassadors abroad were instructed to show him respect and regard. This was meant to help the sect to improve its image and increase its following abroad.

During Mrs. Gandhi's regime, the Nirankaris were known to be receiving financial help from secret Government funds not open to audit or scrutiny by Parliament.

During the Emergency, the recalcitrant attitude of the Akalis further annoyed Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Sanjay Gandhi. Efforts for building a parallel organization among the Sikhs of Punjab as counter-blast to the Akalis were intensified. At the instance of Mrs. Gandhi, the Congress regime in Punjab, led by Giani Zail Singh, began giving greater official patronage to the Nirankaris' sect. Mr. H.S. Chhina, I.A.S., a staunch Nirankari, was appointed Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government in 1976.

As a result of open official patronage and support this sect got a considerable boost within the administrative set up of the Punjab Government. Mr. Chhina appointed Mr. Niranjan Singh, I.A.S. as Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur, Mr. Niranjan Singh tried his best to enlarge the field of operation of the Nirankaris. It is during this period that the Sant of Bhindranwala took up the challenge posed by this growing sect."

Sat Pal Baghi might have also clearly stated that the Government of India directives to their ambassadors abroad specifically required that all necessary steps must be taken to boost Gurbachan Singh among the Sikhs settled abroad.

It Happened Before

This phenomenon, in which Sikh religious sensibility is

calculatedly outraged and their human dignity cruelly injured, has its historical antecedents, in this part of the world. It was in the late twenties of this century that a cultural ancestor of the present anti-Sikh Hindu urban crust wrote and published a small book, purporting to be a 'research-paper' in history, under the title of *Rangila Rasul : Mohammad*, the pleasure-loving prophet; The matrimonial history of this God-intoxicated and world-shaking Prophet was recounted in this booklet in minute details supported by authoritative Muslim writings, and by slants and twists well familiar to history-writers, the conclusion was drawn and spelt out that Mohamad was a lascivious, lecherous man. The booklet was concluded with the mocking epilogue : *Bol Rangila Rasul ki Jai*. Anybody who knows anything about Islam and Muslim sensibility knows that it is basic to them that while "liberties with God are permissible, not so with Mohammad:" *ba khuda diwana bash-o-ba Mohammad hoshiaar*. The entire Muslim world of India writhed in anguish at this gross insult to and attack on the Muslim community but they were laughed at and chided by the Hindu citified Press of Lahore, for being primitive, medieval, religious fanatics, unreformed by sophistication and modern liberal education that teaches objective, critical thinking and dispassionate judgements. To assuage Muslim feelings the British authorities in Punjab, however, prosecuted the publisher of the offensive booklet, under section 295 of the Indian Penal Code, the only statutory provision available in relation to insult to religion. This provision makes it an offence punishable with imprisonment for two years, 'to injure or defile a place of worship or any object held sacred by any class of persons, with the intention of insulting the religion' of others. The publisher was convicted in the lower court, but the Lahore High Court acquitted him for good reasons, because, in the *Rangila Rasul*, neither a place of worship nor a sacred object had been defiled or injured. The book had maliciously insulted the Muslim religion and outraged the religious feelings of

Muslims. It was at this stage that a wailing dirge was often heard in the towns of Punjab during nocturnal stillness :

“O, my Master, the Messenger of God !

My agony is as great as was yours,

When they persecuted you to flee from Mecca to Medina.

Give me a place of refuge similar to the one God gave to you.

My cruel neighbours would not let me live in peace in India.”*

In their utter anguish and unredeemed despair the Indian Muslims felt impotent in their rage and consequently a Muslim, Ilam Din by name, murdered the publisher of the offensive book in broad day light, (the real author had remained anonymous) and was convicted and hanged to death for wilful murder under section 302 of the India Penal Code. The funeral procession of Ilam Din was a huge and spectacular event, led by no less a person than Sir Mohammad Iqbal, ‘the Poet of the East’ and Maulana Zafar Ali, ‘the Father of Urdu journalism,’ to demonstrate the magnitude of injury felt by the entire body of the Indian Muslims. This, however, gave rise to a general impression in the minds of those who perversely believe that to insult the religion, and to outrage the religious sentiments of a fellow citizen is ‘fundamental of freedom of expression’ and ‘liberty of conscience.’ a fundamental right must be repeatedly asserted. Soon after, somebody in the West Punjab, named a pack-donkey of his, as ‘Mohammad’. This was no offence under the law as the High Court judgement in the *Rangila Rasul* case had shown. An outraged Muslim murdered the owner of this pack-donkey and was hanged to death by the judicial courts. Muslims were in deep desperate despair. Not long after, another protagonist of ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘liberty of conscience.’ named his dog as ‘Ahmad,’ a proper name of the prophet of

* *Mere maulla bulalo medine muje,
yahan hind mein denge na jine muje.*

Islam. A Muslim murdered this owner of the dog also for which he paid with his life at the scaffold. At this stage authorities of the British Raj took notice of the gravity of this situation and placed a new provision of law on the Statute, as 295-A, Indian Penal code, which as it stands reads :

“Whoever with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of citizens of India, by words either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.”

This offence under Section 295 A IPC when committed, is not ‘cognisable’, that is neither a police officer on duty nor a private citizen can initiate proceedings against the offender; only the State may, in its discretion, do so. But under Section 10 (1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932, the State Government may declare, by notification, that this offence shall be cognisable when committed in an area specified. Since such offences then altogether stopped in British India, no notification under section 10 (1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act became necessary till 1947. But the process of events that led to bloody communal riots in various parts of India till the creation of India and Pakistan, and the partition of the country itself, with tragic losses in men, money and property, is directly and rightly traceable to the attitudes of a section of the majority community exemplified in the matter of *Rangila Rasul* and the names given to a donkey and a dog. That is how Pakistan was conceived, born and established through blood-shed, and all other explanations are spurious and off the mark.

Continuous Sikh-Baiting

During the last ten or twelve years, these pseudo-nirankaris have merrily and frequently indulged in the game of Sikh-baiting and many times it has led to near-riots, obliging

the police authorities to intervene. On 3rd October, 1966, these pseudo—nirankaris, at Hansi in Haryana, provoked the Hindu population into riotous protests leading to serious injuries to many persons and intervention of the Police because young innocent girls were being taught sex-laxities of this sect. At Hoshiarpur, at Ludhiana, at Chowk Mehta in Amritsar District, there have been riotous protests during the last few years against gross insults hurled by them at Sikhism and the sikh community, but apart from dispersing and arresting outraged Sikhs, the Government authorities, nowhere have taken any concrete steps to check and control this situation. Neither any prosecution of the offending pseudo-nirankaris has been launched, nor preventive steps taken by specifying areas under section 10 (I) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act where such provocations to Sikh religious feelings shall become cognisable offences authorising police authorities to intervene as was that of the Muslims before Partition of India, but the Sikhs have no place outside India to regard it as their refuge and the Sikhs have been softened and conditioned, during the last fifty years, to bear and put up with insults to their religion and all forms of other oppression, patiently and without demur, under the spell of the narcotic cult of non-violence, much against the clear directives of their Gurus, their Prophets, not to turn the other cheek before a tyrant, not to take lying down any insults to their religion, their self-respect and their human dignity. The Sikh Gurus have bidden them to reply to the whip-crack of an oppression with a thunder-bolt and not to die with a whimper but to "die fighting to the bitter end." In Sikh history, there are recorded half a dozen cases, where the Sikh Gurus themselves and the Sikhs afterwards, have deemed it as a question of life and death where deliberate and malicious insults or outrage to their religious susceptibilities and their human dignity was shown, irrespective of what the circumstances and what the consequences. On the 13th April, 1978, at Amritsar, a peaceful batch of Sikh religious devotees, disciplined and of high social positions, marched towards the gathering of the pseudo-nirankaris, their tormentors

and traducers, to protest and plead, but they were stopped over a hundred yards away by the police on duty, till a para-military armed platoon of the Nirankari Seva Mandal, of which Gurbachan Singh, 'the Sustainer of the entire Universe,' is himself the appointed Chief, arrived to murder a dozen and a half innocent Sikhs on the spot and to wound grievously twice as many more.

Without Hope of Reprieve

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Sikhs were internationally recognized as a sovereign political nation and the Sikh State, *Sarkar Khalsa*, extended from Jamuna to Jamrud and Aksai Chin to the appulse of Baluchistan. Their State and sovereignty was lost not on the battlefield but through treachery at the negotiating table. In the freedom struggle of India, they have made sacrifices out of all proportions to their small numbers, despite deliberate erasures of them from all officially prepared records, including the Time-capsule buried in the Old Fort at Delhi. The outgoing British in 1947, formally recognised them as the third legitimate heir to Sovereignty of undivided India, besides Hindus and Muslims, but they remained steadfast in loyalty to the concept and ideal of an undivided India, and a single Indian nation, for which temerity they paid a price, the details of which are not directly relevant to the present occasion. Since 1947, they have strained their every nerve and staked their entire potential in developing and defending India, on the agricultural field and in the industrial factory, for cultural togetherness and for victory on the field of battle. But they are, so they feel and not without reason, that their destiny has been fixed by the rulers of Delhi as expendable, as manure and as a vanishing quantity in the crucible of the Indian Political laboratory. Our brave and brilliant military generals have died in mass accidents or coronary shocks of supersessions, Our able and capable Civil Servants have been liquidated unceremoniously against law and against good conscience, or degraded and demoralised. Psycho-economic offensives have continuously been mounted against them to reduce their numbers in the country, to eliminate their natural

pre-eminence in the armed forces and to sap their spiritual vitality. Public media and law courts have frequently treated them as less than citizens of India. Their unshaken pride in and loyalty to the integrity of the country and the goal of a united Indian nation has been viewed as unreliable and suspicious and our move to press and highlight our just demands had often been met with bullets, smear-campaigns pervert findings of quasijudicial investigations and hostile policies, and the death sentence pre-determined against them is made to appear as without any hope of reprieve. It was in this background that the Sikhs entered on a last ditch, sustained successful struggle against the Congress rule at Delhi, culminating in the Emergency regime, hoping that a new dispensation and a chastened political leadership at Delhi might have a second look at the Sikhs situation with a view to reappraise their true legitimate position in India and to afford them some let up from the suffocation and strangulation which has been their lot, since 1947. In the massacre of Sikhs at Amritsar, on the 13th of April, 1978, the Sikhs can hardly see a silverlining, even after greatly straining their eyes. The Sikhs, however, persist in hoping that sooner than later, a new understanding of them will arise, without some great tragedy or cataclysm intervening.

True Felicity For Man

If Man would have true felicity
and his existential situation redeemed,
Then let him accept and act Truth.
Let him live in nearness to God through
remembering Him.
Let him altogether be humble
and thus be one with God.
Let him hurt no one and thus abide
steadfast in the inner peace of his heart.
Nanak testifies for all to hear; God is

omniscient to purify and exalt the fallen and
the debased.*

—Guru Granth Sahib.

Report

Gurbachan Singh—The Baba; as he is referred to, reached Kanpur at about 9.30 p.m. on the evening of 25th Sept., 1978. There were four motor cycles piloting the procession, and more than a dozen vehicles including one of the Nirankari Chief, flanked by Security Officers with helmets which formed the carcade when it crossed the *chungi*. How many of them were police vehicles and how many private, is difficult to assess, but there is no doubt that both police and Nirankaries had collaborated together to provide more than needed protection force to escort Gurbachan Singh safely into the sanctum sanctorum of Nirankari Bhawan.

2. Frustrated at not being able to address earlier at three other places in U.P. he was anxious to speak at Kanpur. The assurance of success, with the support of authorities, was conveyed to him by one Aya Singh, who had, only a few days earlier, got hair cut, and beard trimmed, to demonstrate his spirit of being more loyal than the king and gone to Baba to bring him to Kanpur, presumably after having made all arrangements with the police. When we visited Nirankari Bhawan, this Aya Singh appeared to be the chief spokesman, and the leader of the Nirankaries.

3. He confessed to us that he had brought the Baba, and

* ਜਿਸ ਸਰਬ ਸੁਖਾ ਫਲੁ ਲੋੜੀਅਹੁ ਸੋ ਸਚ ਕਮਾਵਉ ।
ਨੇੜੇ ਪੇਖੋ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ, ਇਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵਉ ।
ਹੋਇ ਸਗਲ ਕੀ ਰੇਣੁਕਾ ਹਰਿ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਮਾਵਉ ।
ਦੁਖੁ ਨ ਦੇਈ ਕਿਸੈ ਜੀਅ, ਪਤ ਸਿਰਿ ਘਰ ਜਾਵਉ ।
ਪਤਿਤ ਪੁਨੀਤ ਕਰਤਾਪੁਰਖ, ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਣਾਵਉ ॥

conceded that he had anticipated mild protests by the Sikhs, but never such developments as had occurred.

4. On 25th evening, the CID men had gone round to every Gurdwara, contacted many prominent Sikhs, and made enquiries as to whether any outsiders, and particularly the Nihangs had arrived from outside, and were assured that none had come. These CID people also hinted the possibility of Gurbachan Singh visiting Kanpur and tried to know if the Sikhs had taken any decision as to how they would react to his presence and his addressing in the Nirankari Bhawan. They were told that the Sikhs had not taken any objection to Satsangs which were being held regularly in the Bhawan but if Baba Gurbachan Singh addressed the gathering, he was certain to make derogatory remarks about the Sikh Gurus, and that would certainly exasperate the Sikhs. The CID expressed satisfaction that there had been no arrivals from outside and the local Sikh Community had no plans to create any trouble or take any action. This assessment, expressed orally, was the correct position, The Sikhs, or any group of them, had no consultations among themselves, and had no plans at all for any demonstration even.

5. As mentioned already, the Nirankari Baba had reached Kanpur well guarded and had entrenched himself in the Bhawan. There was enough police force, in addition to his own volunteers, these too dressed in police type Khaki uniforms. We cannot vouchsafe, but it is a probability that late at night on the 25th, and early morning of 26th September, the Nirankari volunteers went round the city to inform every devotee of their faith—if this can be called so, of the presence of Baba, and to urge upon him to attend and listen to him.

6. In their zeal the volunteers must have contacted some new expected converts also, and thus the news reached the Sikhs as well. There is a very big institution, Gurdwara Kirtangarh, where Hindus and Sikhs, believers in Guru Granth Sahib, assemble together daily. This is managed and

controlled by Bhai Mohan, a very reputed pious man, who has nothing to do with politics and is respected by Hindus and Sikhs alike. In the morning routine and normal prayer meeting, some Sikhs broke the news of the arrival of Baba of Nirankaries in the town and his plans to address in the Bhawan. They thought he was sure to indulge in provocatives, and that might injure the sentiments of the Sikhs. They thought it advisable to go and try to persuade Baba to desist from it. After the prayers, about half a dozen persons started for Gurdwara Gobindpuri where Guru Nanak Dev's Shradh Day was being celebrated. Shradhs are forbidden in Sikhism, but this deviation is still observed in a very few places under the influence of old brahmanical practices. In Kanpur Block No.4 is the only Gurdwara, where this day is celebrated. Consequently there was a special gathering of conservative Sikhs. The Nihangs, the Akalis and the enlightened denounce this celebration, and never participate in this.

7. The few from Kirtangarh Gurdwara joined the congregation, and apprised those present there of the planned address of Baba Gurbachan Singh. Many more showed their willingness to join in this mission. They formed into groups which actually looked like a regular procession and marched towards the Nirankari Bhawan singing hymns and reciting Waheguru. That their intention was peaceful: is evident from the fact, that they did not arm themselves with any weapon. Women and children also joined the protesters. There is no wonder that a very few might be wearing full Kirpans on their persons. But that was as a usual and normal religion's, requirement, and not a special weapon then taken on, as a weapon for assault. There must be some who wore small kirpans as symbols of their discipline. There was no weapon that was particularly acquired for that procession. That they marched on and travelled a distance of 3 K.M. without interruption, and included a good number of ladies and children, should be enough proof that their intentions, as evidenced by their behaviour, were peaceful. If the Station Officer's version be accepted in that, he got the information

at 8 A.M. that a procession armed with lethal weapons and shouting provocative slogans was marching to the Bhawan, then an extremely relevant question arises, as to what did the police do to check and stop the procession? The additional police also was sent straight to the Bhawan. This shows that the police was only anxious to attend to the punitive side and deliberately ignored the preventive aspect, which should have been attended to first.

8. The 3 K.M. march took about an hour and a half. The procession passed through crowded Bazars and frequented streets. It must have attracted many spectators also. During its march, it had to pass through a point on the road, on one side of which there was a Police Station and on the other a Police Post. The rank and file of policemen stood on both sides of the road watching the procession, enjoying jokes, but taking no notice of the procession. The only irresistible conclusion is that either the conduct of the processionists was so peaceful that it did not warrant any notice or the Police had a pre-determined plan to let them fall into the trap that had been laid for them in the Nirankari Bhawan.

9. The gates of the Nirankari Bhawan hall had been closed and bolted from inside and only one gate was kept opened. There was police force inside the hall as well as outside. As soon as the processionists reached the outer gate of the enclosure of Bhawan they were asked not to enter. Immediately the brickbats, stones as also fire shots, came from the Bhawan roof forcing the processionists to run all sides. Some pressed their way into the Bhawan through the only gate that was open, but was shut behind them cleverly. Those who had gone in were faced with bullets and lathi charges. They must have tried to find their way out and struggled for their survival. Apparently they were so cornered that they could not find any escape. Even a cat in such a situation would prove deadly. So naturally, they fought back with whatever they had. The outsiders faced the bullets and ran on all sides to save themselves but were chased and shot at. The Police did

not attend to the injured ; some of whom might have been saved. Rather subsequently, those who tried to attend to the wounded were shot at and scared away. It was a deliberate trap. It had been laid for the Sikhs who were tempted to fall into it by the conduct of the police. The Police was so cruel and vindictive that one S. Manmohan Singh—who had been hiding himself in the nearby building; when came out two hours after the firing was over, believing that he could go out safely, and was unlocking his scooter on the road to ride away for his business, was spotted and shot dead. Such callouness on the part of Police in the whole affair and the partisanship and collusion may be unparalleled. Briefly, we give separately the conclusions that we have reached.

(Sd.) HUKAM SINGH

Chairman

(Sd.) MEHAR SINGH CHADHA

Member

(Sd.) HAZARA SINGH CUNDOLA

Member

DELHI

12TH OCT. 78

Conclusions

1. The tragedy resulting in 13 deaths and over two scores injured, could have been easily averted if the Police had intended it
2. The situation was allowed to develop unchecked until the Sikhs reached the Nirankari Bhawan, where they were trapped and then shot at indiscriminately.
3. Preparations had already been made in the Bhawan, where large heap of stone pieces and brickbats were collected on the roofs. These were used as missiles as soon as the Sikhs approached the Bhawan. Besides, the Nirankari volunteers were armed with lathis, fire arms and other lethal weapons.
4. The Police was not equipped fully with lathis or tear gas

shells either, ordinarily pressed into service for dispersing crowds, before resorting to shooting.

5. The shooting was to kill, and not to disperse assembly or protect any human lives or property, as almost all the bullets were aimed at parts above the hips of the dead and the injured.
6. The Police, according to its own report, received at 8 a.m. the information that a procession was proceeding towards Nirankari Bhawan. During an hour and a half interval that it had, no magistrate was requested to be on the spot, nor was any senior officer deputed to assess the situation and deal with it. The SO was left alone to take all decisions as he liked, and he had already plans ready for shoot to kill as is apparent from his equipping himself and his Assistants with service revolvers and his force only with rifles of 303 bullets, and nothing else.
7. The processionists had to march 3 K.M. singing religious hymns according to them, and shouting slogans according to Police. The procession passed off through a point on the road, on one side of which is the Police Station, and on the other the Police Post. The Police rank and file, on both sides, watched the procession pass without any hitch or hindrance, enjoyed jokes, but remained otherwise unconcerned.
8. The gates of the Bhawan Hall had been closed and bolted from inside with only one kept open. At the enclosure gate, the processionists were only asked not to enter the Hall. They insisted that they wanted to meet the Baba. The missiles from above forced them to rush on every side, and a few made their way in. No force was used to prevent them, nor was the assembly declared unlawful. When some had been trapped in, the only gate open was closed. There was police inside the Hall also. There were volleys of brickbats on the crowd outside, and murderous assault on those trapped in by using fire-arms, brickbats, lathis and other lethal wea-

pons. The F. I. R. filed by the Sikhs states that the first shot was fired by Baba Gurbachan Singh from his resort. The Sikhs found themselves cornered with no chance of escape. Thus in desperation they struggled and fought back. In this struggle the doors might have been damaged, the window panes shattered. Even a cat so cornered becomes deadly. Those confined inside struggled to come out; those outside fought to rescue their companions entrapped inside, simultaneously trying to save themselves from the bullets.

9. There were volleys of firing without warning or any declaration of assembly as unlawful. Every Sikh fleeing or trying to find shelter was chased and fired at.
10. The Police was not satisfied with such a big bag of trophies. A youngman S. Manmohan Singh had hidden himself in the adjacent building. Two hours after firing had ceased, he believed that he could go out safely. He came out, and was unlocking his scooter on the road to ride away for his business, when he was spotted out, and shot at. He died at the spot.
11. The Police did not attend to the injured and wounded, to see whether any could be saved. Rather those attempting to remove them for first aid were fired at and scared away.
12. There were no Nihangs or any other outsider. A bad odour had been injected in the word 'Nihang', when there was culpable shooting of Nihangs in Haryana. This was done to give the dog a bad name and then kill it. This strategy has caught the imagination of Sikh phobes as a convenient manoeuvre to describe every Sikh as a Nihang and present him as a scoundrel by covering him mischievously with an imaginary robe, which is not there. The press have taken this up and sustained it some of them mischievously, others unknowingly.
13. The question of use of excessive force by the Police becomes superfluous and irrelevant as revolvers and rifles

303 was the only equipment with them, and this was the minimum they could press in, and they did.

14. The atrocities committed by the Police were so terrifying that the Sikhs were completely paralysed and could not dare mention them even.
15. No Sikh dared to file first information report. Consequently, there was much delay. When ultimately it had to be done, it was made to order, and all leaders were asked to sign it, so that every one might be pinned down to that statement exonerating the Police.
16. The whole conduct of the District authorities (police as well as civil) leads us to the belief that they thought, and acted accordingly, in that, the Nirankari Bhawan was their native territory and the police force was its defence army and that this territory was threatened with invasion by an alien army (Sikhs)! The Home strategists planned to consolidate all their strength in the fortress, and allow the enemy to proceed unchecked all the distance. No Magistrate appeared and no senior officer cared. Rather the forces of the territory in the way stood aside (in the Police Station and the Police Post) unconcerned. The supposed aliens reached the fortress, where defending forces lay in ambush, Then it was, that the concerted attack was made to destroy the enemy. If the ambushed naives fought in desperation, and caused damage, who is to blame? The District authorities completely forgot that they were the guardians, and Nirankaries and Sikhs were both their wards. Timely preventive steps could easily have saved this catastrophe, which has been so gruesome.

Sd. Hukam Singh
Chairman

Sd. Mehar Singh Chadha
Member

Sd. Hazara Singh Cundola
Member

DELHI
12th Oct. 78

Recommendations

The Sikh processionists — ladies, men and children, against all odds and grave provocation, have displayed a high spirit of restraint and self sacrifice. Some of them had to make supreme sacrifice by braving the bullets of the Police as well as of the Nirankaries, while some others were permanently disabled. Two youngmen have become martyrs, leaving behind two young widows who are M. A. s in their early twenties, and have small children.

The Committee venture to suggest that some immediate suitable arrangements be made :—

- (a) for the gainful employment of these two young ladies;
- (b) for proper up-bringing of the children of these two young widows and thereafter for their free education;
- (c) to render every possible help, medical and others to the injured;
- (d) to compensate the affected for the injuries/disability/losses suffered.

General Observations

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee in its wisdom, constituted a Committee, consisting of myself (Hukam Singh) Sardar Mehar Singh Chadha, Retired District and Sessions Judge and S. Hazara Singh Cundola, Advocate, Supreme Court, to go and enquire into the happenings of September 26, 1978 at Kanpur which resulted in deaths of more than a dozen and injuries to a large number of persons.

We left on 30th September 1978. The Kanpur direct flight was not available that day, so we had to take Lucknow flight. On reaching there we thought it advisable to call on

the Chief Minister and the Governor to apprise them of our mission and to find out Government's attitude. The Chief Minister had strong and prepossessed views, which apparently had been passed on to him. After some discussions he was good enough to soften down a little. The Governor was very courteous and polite, though he too was natural to have similar notions akin to those of the Chief Minister about the incident.

We reached Kanpur by Taxi. We were well advised not to stay with anyone individual, and so we were housed in a hotel, where everyone could easily approach us and talk to us frankly. September 30th afternoon, we spent in apprising ourselves with facts, which were known to leaders in the Gurdwara and the Akali Dal. In general, the Sikhs appeared frightened and demoralised. As everywhere else, there were some dissensions as well. Immediately after our arrival in Kanpur we sent news to the local newspapers, inviting everyone—whosoever had any information relating to the happenings of 26th September 1978; to come and depose before us on October 1st and 2nd between 9 a. m. to 1 p. m. and 3 p. m. to 7 p. m. in the Dharamsala Gujarati, where we decided to conduct the enquiry. This news was published next morning.

On October 1, we started with inspection of the scenes and spots connected with the incident. We went into the Nirankari Bhawan, were taken round by the S. O. Police and the Nirankari leaders, shown all scenes and spots of occurrence and given their versions of the happenings. We heard all what they had to say without any questions or cross examination.

We went to Gurdwara Gobindnagar, met the Sikhs that were available and gathered as much information as we could. But as no advance information had been given, the head granthi and the office holders of the Gurdwara were not there. They met us afterwards and we recorded their statements.

Then we went to the hospital wards, where the injured were being treated, and recorded the statements of all—Sikhs

as also Nirankaries; admitted there. Some had been discharged earlier. Them also, we invited to give us facts as they knew. We went to the houses of the survivors of the dead, and collected facts.

We have scanned the evidence recorded, studied the Information Reports, seen the places of occurrences. We submit our report as desired. The statements recorded are in Annexure 'B', Copies of other documents in Annexure 'C' and Relevant cuttings of Newspapers in Annexure 'D'. The conclusions reached are given separately and our recommendations for relief or rehabilitation are also attached along with the Conclusions.

B-1078

